

THE M·A HĀBHĀRATA

A SUMMARY

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PREFACE

THE attempt to summarize a work containing more than 3 000 closely printed pages in its English translation is a task attended by many dangers. The present writer confesses that in making his selections he has told only the most interesting and characteristic legends giving the others the go by; he has narrated only the most striking events in the story of the Pandus' exile referring as briefly as he could to the amazing narrative of the eighteen days' battle which drags its weary length through no less than seven books of the poem. On the other hand he has tried to give as full an account as possible of all that is good and inspiring in its moral and philosophical teaching if he has also given some place to what is insipid and wrong.

This summary has been prepared because of the feeling that far too little attention is paid to the *Mahābhārata* by students of Hinduism and it is hoped that a study of it will send the reader to the *Mahābhārata* itself to read it in the English translation prepared under the editorship of Mr M. N. Dutt M.A. to whom the writer begs to render his most grateful thanks.

The *Mahābhārata* is the great storehouse of Hindu thought and feeling. It shows us not only Hinduism at the transition stage when the teaching of the Brahmins was losing its power but it brings us right up to the ideas that Hindus hold to day.

It is from the *Mahābhārata* that later books have drawn much of their teaching and inspiration and the present day Hindu though he may never have read a page of its contents will never the less recognize its doctrines when quoted to him and declare that they are his own.

J. M. MACFIE

NASIRABAD
RAJPUTANA

Note on the Pronunciation of Indian words

Short a has the sound of a in rural, or of u in lull

Long a has the sound of a in father, and tai

Short i has the sound of i in fill

Long i has the sound of i in police, or of ee in feed.

As the book is for the benefit of the general reader no distinction has been made between the palatal and lingual sibilants, or between lingual and dental t and d. It should also be noted that th and dh are the aspirates of t and d and have no equivalents in English. Similarly bh and ph are the aspirates of b and p.

Short a in an open syllable and consequently at the end of a word is not sounded in Hindi, e g Bala-iāma is pronounced as Bulrām

CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION	1
I THE BOOK OF BEGINNINGS	25
II THE ASSEMBLY BOOK	53
III THE FOREST BOOK	62
IV THE VIRATA BOOK	97
V THE EFFOIT BOOK	101
VI THE BHISHMA BOOK	110
VII THE DROWA BOOK	117
VIII THE KAINA BOOK	126
IX THE SHALYA BOOK	131
X THE BOOK OF SLUMBER	136
XI THE BOOK OF THE WOMEN	142
XII THE BOOK OF CONSOLATION	145
XIII THE BOOK OF PRECEPTS	183
XIV THE BOOK OF THE HORSE SACRIFICE	199
XV THE HERMITAGE BOOK	207
XVI THE BOOK OF CLUBS	213
XVII THE BOOK OF THE GREAT JOURNEY	218
XVIII THE BOOK OF THE ASCENT TO HEAVEN	221

APPENDICES

I	THE DUTY OF GIVING GIFTS TO BRAH- MINS	225
II	THE WOMAN WHOSE SEX WAS CHANGED	226
III	HOW DEATH WAS BORN	228
IV	THE INDIAN KING MIDAS	230
V	VISHNU, SHIVA'S ARROW AND BRAHMA HIS CHARIOTEER	231
VI	KING SHIVI, THE HAWK AND THE PIGLON	232

NOTES

1.	THE EPIC PRIEST	235
2	THE FOUR AGES OF THE WORLD	236
3	PRAJAPATI, THE PRAJAPATIS AND THE RISHIS	237
4	THE LUNAR RACE	238
5	VASISHIHA AND AGASTYA	240
6	DURVASA	240
7	DRINKING CUSTOMS	241
8	THE RISHI NARADA	242
9	THE DISCUSSION BETWEEN DRAUPADI AND YUDHISTHIRA	243
10	RAKSHASAS AND YAKSHAS	243
11	THE ASURAS, DAITYAS AND DANAVAS	244
12	MANU	244
13	GANDHARVAS AND APSARASES	245
14	THE BHAGAVADGITA	245
15	NARA-NARAYANA	245
16	THE EXAGGERATIONS IN THE MAHA- BHARATA	246
17	THE SANKHYA AND THE YOGA	247
18	THE VEDAS	249
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	252
	INDEX	253

THE MAHABHARATA

Introduction

THE *Mahāb'ārata* or the great Bhārata has, as its central theme, the story of the jealousies and wars that arose between the hundred sons of the blind King Dhritrīshtra, and the five sons of that prince's dead brother Pāndu. They lived at Hastināpurā some 60 miles to the north of Delhi. At first Dhritrīshtra treated his nephews with great kindness but owing to faults on both sides it was arranged that the five Pāndus should leave Hastināpurā and found a capital for themselves at a place to which they gave the name of Indraprastha. There they acquired immense wealth and glory, by conquering the whole earth. In honour of their conquests, they celebrated the Rājasuya sacrifice. The riches displayed at the sacrifice as well as the tribute offered by the great multitude of conquered kings present on the occasion provoked the jealousy of Duryodhanā, the eldest son of the old king and he declared that he would kill himself if he did not make that wealth and power his own. By the advice of his uncle Shakuni, he challenged Yudhishthira¹ the eldest of the Pāndus, to play at dice. Two gambling matches took place. In the first Yudhishthira pledged and lost his kingdom and wealth, his brothers and himself and finally their wife Drupadī, whom the five brothers held in common. At the second match the challenge was that the defeated party should go into exile for thirteen years. Here again Yudhishthira lost, and the Pāndus lived in banishment for thirteen years. When their exile was over they came back, and fought with their cousins described as the Kurus, a battle which lasted for eighteen days, and in which many millions of

¹ The names of the five Pāndus were Yudhishthira Arjuna Bhīma Sahadeva and Nakula.

men were slain. The only survivors were the five Pāndus, the god Krishna, and a person called Sātyaki. The Pāndus had thus the whole kingdom to themselves, and acquired fresh wealth and glory. When thirty-six years had passed away, the Pāndus were filled with a great desire to leave the world. This desire was strengthened by the fact that their friend Krishna with the whole of his race had perished at Dwāraka.

The five brothers and their wife Draupadī accordingly set out for heaven. They were accompanied by a dog. After many adventures, in which Yudhishthira unaided reached the very top of Mt Meru, they entered heaven.

This is the central theme of the epic, but the story of the Pāndus, which has often been retold forms but a small part of the poem. During the centuries, when it was growing to its present size, it gathered to itself countless stories of gods and demons, rishis and Brāhmīns and kings. It gives lengthy genealogies of gods and demigods, it tells of the creation of the world, of the four ages which follow one another without end, ever renewed as each cycle reaches its close, it describes the continents and seas which compose the universe, and the different kingdoms and tribes of men. Its religious teaching is equally full of variety. There are long dissertations, often of a very lofty kind, on the beauty of forgiveness, meekness, purity and truth, standing side by side with stories of gods and ascetics for whom all that teaching would seem to have been given in vain. The Vedic gods still occupy place and power, though their influence is more than challenged by the sectarian deities, Vishnu and Shiva. There are long descriptions of the various places of pilgrimage. The power of asceticism is illustrated by the lives and deeds of holy men. The sanctity of cows, and particularly of Brāhmīns is specially enforced. At the same time relics of older worships both in their higher and lower forms can easily be traced and the same book defends and denounces the practice of eating flesh, sets forth and denies the benefit of pilgrimages and sacri-

fice It is an ancient and true saying that what is not in the *Mahābhārata* is not in Bhārata (India)

The book itself attributes its authorship to Vyasa, the rishi, who is also credited with arranging the Vedas. But it says also with that frank inconsistency which is one of its charms that the poem originally consisted of only 24 000 verses. As it stands at present it is nearly eight times as large as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together. As to the date of the poem the Pāndus are said to have lived towards the close of the Dwāpara Yuga, one of the four ages of the world (Book I c 2 and Book VI c 10). The age in which we live is called the Kaliyuga, and is destined to last for 432,000 years. No one is prepared to say how many years of this present age have passed away, but as the Dwāpara Yuga contained 864,000 years, twice as many as the Kali Yuga, Hindus are disposed to claim a high antiquity for the poem. Scholars on the other hand are generally of the opinion that the poem, as we have it, must have been completed not later than about 500 A.D. while it began to take shape in the fifth century B.C. The frequent references to the Yāvanas or Greeks on the one hand and the Shakas or Scythians and the Hunas (White Huns) on the other, make any other dates impossible.¹

The advantages of reading the *Mahābhārata* are frequently emphasized. If you have heard it read, there is no need to bathe in Pushkara, because even one verse is able to wipe away all sin. The gods put it in the scales against the four Vedas, and found the *Mahābhārata* heavier. Shudras and women are permitted to listen to its recital, a favour denied to them as regards the Vedas, and thus obtain salvation. For that reason it has even been called the fifth Veda.

The Gods of the Mahabharata When we come to consider the poem with some detail, we find that

¹ As an illustration of the easy way in which the poem deals with dates note the fact that Parashurama, an incarnation of Vishnu who came to earth in the Treta Yuga, is still on earth when Krishna, another incarnation of Vishnu, lived at Dwaraka about one million years after.

² A sacred lake near Ajmer, Rajputana.

the older Vedic gods are constantly referred to and the book is full of stories regarding them. Brahmā, Vishnu and Shiva, have however already acquired the pre-eminence they occupy in modern Hinduism. But it would seem that even then Brahmā's work was done. He is identified with Prajāpati, as the Creator of the Universe, and the world he has made, can go on without him. Probably that is one of the reasons why he is so often referred to as the Grandsire. Though his work is in many respects over, he is never the less always treated with great respect, and is looked upon as the last court of appeal. The gods and rishis are constantly going to him, in solemn deputation, when some evil or injustice or danger threatens them. But it is not Brahmā who helps them. In almost every case, it is Vishnu who devises some plan of deliverance. The grandsire has a most fatal passion for granting boons to gods and demons, rishis and men, and a great many of the complications and difficulties that arise are due to that deity granting a boon, before he knows what it is to be. Having given his word, like king Herod, he cannot draw back, and so Vishnu and occasionally some other deity has to do something extraordinary, whereby the recipient of the boon may be out-witted or overcome.

Vishnu's incarnation as Rāma, the son of Dasharatha, was occasioned in that way. The demon Rāvana was a great ascetic. He stood on one leg for a thousand years, he cast his ten heads into a sacrificial fire as an offering to Brahmā, and so gratified the grandsire that he received the promise that neither gods nor demons should prevail against him. In his pride he did not dream of fearing beasts or men. And that is why Vishnu took form as a man, and the other gods as bears and monkeys that they might be able to overcome Rāvana.¹

In the greater part of the poem, Vishnu, particularly in his form of Krishna, is recognized as the chief god. He is the god of gods, the origin of the

universe, and the upholder of all things. His various incarnations are referred to, and some of them described in detail. It is a remarkable fact that when the rishi Mārkaṇḍeya spoke to the Pāṇḍus about the sorrows of Rāma and Sītā, Yudhiṣṭhira said he had never heard of them, and asked the rishi who they were.

While Krishna is in many respects the hero of the poem, as the helper of the Pāṇḍus, we find other passages, especially as the poem proceeds exalting the glory and might of Shiva. Indeed when the battle was at its hottest, and Drona's son asks Vyāsa why the Kurus were being defeated, he is not told that it is because Krishna the incarnation of Vishnu is acting as Arjuna's charioteer, but that Shiva was helping their foes. The Drona Book indeed closes with a hymn of praise addressed to Shiva by no less a being than Brahmā himself who recognizes Shiva as the Supreme. In the same book, also we find Arjuna who is over and over again associated with Vishnu in the strange partnership of Narā Nārāyaṇa, changing his attitude, and recognizing Shiva as unique. Most interesting of all, in the hope of getting Shiva's assistance Krishna and Arjuna together visit Shiva in heaven. They acknowledge his lordship, while the deity in return gives them no greater title than that of the best of men.

These very striking contradictions make it quite clear that the adherents of the two great Hindu sects, the Vaiṣṇavas and Śaivas have both had a share in shaping the contents of the poem.

To recur for a little to the older gods it is one of the puzzles of the book to understand why the writers spent so much time telling stories about gods in whom they appear to have had little more than an historical interest. Indra is repeatedly referred to in language that is at least disrespectful though it does not approach the abuse which Tulsidās in his *Rāmāyaṇ* pours upon that god. Indra's heaven, again is pictured as a place full of lovely females who are at the disposal of the persons who reach that abode. Brahmā's heaven on the other hand, cannot be seen even from afar by

the impure It took a rishi a thousand years of meditation, before he was allowed to behold it. But king Yayāti spent millions of years in Indra's heaven, sporting with the celestial nymphs Indra had Arjuna with him for some years in his heaven, teaching him the use of the various weapons he had lent him, and before his son left, the god resolved that he should enjoy the society of one of these females When Arjuna resisted the girl's overtures, he was told that all his ancestors enjoyed the privilege that he was rejecting (Book III. c. 46)

Indra himself is said to have ravished Ahalyā, the wife of the rishi Gautama (Book V c 12) Such a sin is always declared to be equal to that of killing a Brāhmin But this sin also India is said to have committed, and in consequence was compelled to go into hiding He was only found after great difficulty, and with still greater difficulty, persuaded to come back to heaven He only agreed to do so, when he discovered that his successor in office had been hurled from heaven and his own sin of Brāhminicide expiated in a horse sacrifice offered by the gods ¹ We have another story recorded in the first book (c 213, 214) in which Shiva also is involved When the architect of the gods had constructed a particularly beautiful maiden specially designed to tempt two demons, who were threatening the stability of the three worlds, both Shiva and Indra were so anxious to keep on looking at her, that the one produced a thousand eyes, and the other a face on every side of his head ² Evidently the authors of the *Māhābharata* believed that their gods were possessed of all the evil passions and weaknesses of men allied to the power and dignity of God How to reconcile such stories with the lofty conceptions of morality so often and so beautifully inculcated is the eternal problem of the student of Hinduism.

When the gods become incarnate and dwell among men one should expect that they would be made the

- ¹ *Mahābhārata* Book V c 10

² *Mahābhārata* Book I c 213

vehicles for teaching a high morality. As regards Arjuna and Yudhishthira who are joint incarnations of the god Indra, in one place, and sons of Indra and Dharma the god of justice in another we find this to be so. They are frequently represented as insisting on honesty and truth. Krishna, the incarnation of the god Vishnu however acts quite otherwise. He repeatedly gives advice which is rejected by Arjuna and only accepted with great reluctance by Yudhishthira. He insists for instance that if they wish to gain the victory in the battle against their cousins, they must in some way or other deceive Drona the general of the Kuru forces. The virtuous Yudhishthira is accordingly compelled to tell Drona that his son has been killed in battle when the son was really alive. Drona was unwilling to believe it, but then he remembered that Yudhishthira's regard for truth was so great he would not tell a lie to gain the lordship of the three worlds. In consequence the old man believed the lie that had been told him, and losing heart, was the more easily conquered and slain. Though the god of gods as he is often termed gave this advice the eternal laws of morality were offended and Yudhishthira's car touched the ground while Arjuna declared that he would have to go to hell for consenting to such wickedness¹. Despite his promise not to fight, Krishna had on more than one occasion to be forcibly and ignominiously restrained from taking part in the battle with the Kurus. When thus compelled to retire by Arjuna, he was so angry that he would not speak.

Yudhishthira and many others also repeatedly declare that nothing is greater than truth. Krishna however maintains that lying is permissible in dealing with women in arranging a marriage, and to save the lives of cows and Brāhmins. It is noteworthy that in the lengthy dispute which arose over Drona's unfair slaughter Krishna maintained a discreet silence.

So far as this poem is concerned, the view which still prevails in some parts of India, seems to have

¹ *Mahābhārata* Bk VII c 191-197-199

² *Mahābhārata* Bk IX c 6

been held *Sāmarthi ko dosh nahin* The powerful can do what they please without committing sin

Pre-eminence of Brahmins. The sacredness of the Brāhmin caste is emphasized in almost every chapter. The statement in the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa that 'there are two kinds of gods, first the gods, then those who are Brāhmins, and have learned the Veda, and repeat it, they are human gods,' expresses the mind of those who wrote the *Mahābhārata*. The god Krishna asked permission to wash the feet of Brāhmins at Yudhishthira's great sacrifice. Indra performed the menial task of carrying fuel for a sacrifice conducted by the rishi Kashyapa. Should any one kill a Brāhmin, there is no expiation for so great a sin (Bk I c 163). Brāhmins, we are told, are often very irritable, and are more to be avoided than an angry virulently poisonous snake or a blazing fire. A Brāhmin when angry destroys cities and kingdoms (Bk I c 81). The duty of conciliating them with gifts is constantly enforced. For other men it is a great infamy to accept gifts, but a Brāhmin can take them without shame. A forest visited by Yudhishthira was full of Brāhmins and rishis and two sounds were heard on every side, the sound caused by the reciting of the Vedas, and the sound caused by these holy men crying 'Give, give'. It is by means of gifts to Brāhmins, that the gods are made friendly to men (Bk I c 93) and the highest virtue possible for kings was to hand over the earth, when they had conquered it, to Brāhmins.¹ It was only when they ruled their kingdom by the help of Brāhmins, that princes could hope for prosperity. The great king Vishvāmitra, after attaining the summit of earthly glory, realized that his glory was nothing compared to that of a Brāhmin. He accordingly gave himself up to great asceticism, and was at last rewarded by being changed into a Brāhmin, and even drank soma with the god Indra (Bk I c 177). When a king and a Brāhmin happened to meet on the road, it was the duty of the king to stand on one side. The First

¹ See Appendix No. 1. The duty of giving gifts to Brāhmins,

Book (c 178) tells of a king who was transformed into a cannibal Rākshasa for refusing to give way. The power of cursing possessed by Brāhmīns was frequently exercised. The Book of Clubs tells how the whole of the Yādu race, the race of Krishna was destroyed as the result of a curse called down upon it by the rishis Nārada, Kanva and Vishvāmītra. Sometimes a Brāhmīn regretted that he had been too hasty, but once a curse had been uttered it was not possible to take it back. Curses cannot fail. At the best, a mitigation of their extent or severity is possible. A Brāhmīn when out hunting once wounded a Rishi by accident and the angry saint cursed his brother to be born in his next life, as a low caste Shudra. When the Rishi realized that the Brāhmīn had intended him no harm, he was sorry that he had lost his temper. But when asked to take his curse back he declared that that could not be. Otherwise the word he had spoken would be rendered untrue. As a favour he promised that the Brāhmīn would be born a virtuous Shudra, and at the next transmigration he became a Brāhmīn once more (Bk III c 214). From these curses not even the gods could escape. Indra, on one occasion laughed at some Rishis who were only the height of a thumb. The Rishis got very angry, and at once began a sacrifice with the purpose of creating another Indra and driving the god who had insulted them from his throne in heaven. Had the sacrifice been duly completed nothing would have saved the deity from disaster. Kashyapa the rishi already referred to, managed however to effect a partial reconciliation but Indra had to promise that he would never insult a Brāhmīn again (Bk I c 32).

Brāhmīns and Rishis also enjoyed a liberty with regard to the requirements of the moral law which was not granted to ordinary men. When the girl Sarmishta was found to have given birth to a child her mistress reproved her very severely. Her reproof however changed into approval, when the girl explained that the baby's father was a Rishi (Bk I c 83).

When king Vichitra Virya died, leaving no issue, Vyāsa was invited to associate with the dead man's queens, with the result that Pāndu and Dhṛitarāshtra were born. The traditional author of the *Mahābhārata* was thus the grandfather of the princes who fought at Kurukshetra (Bk I c. 105). When the propriety of such conduct was questioned, it was explained that after Parashurāma, one of the incarnations of Vishnu, had completely destroyed all the men of the Kshatriya caste, the Brāhmins had taken pity on their widows, and thus re-peopled the earth with a new warrior race.

The great rishi Vasishtha also was once invited by a king to visit his queen for a similar purpose and after a period of twelve years a child was born¹ (Bk I c 179). Parāsara, another Rishi, took advantage of the maiden Satyawati, when she was ferrying him across the Jumna (Bk I c. 105).

When Pāndu found that he was precluded from the hope of ever becoming a father, he quoted Manu to the effect that in such circumstances a man was permitted to raise up sons by means of others, and he specially commanded his queen to seek the society of some Brāhmin superior to himself in ascetic virtue (Bk I c 120). The queen however had a charm by which she was able to call the gods themselves to her side. The result was that before he died five sons (the Pāndus) had been born by the instrumentality of the gods Dhaima, Indra, Vāyu and the Ashwins (Bk I c 120, 123). There is one amazing story, surely it is a very primitive tale indeed, and yet it is told without any expression of horror or reproof, that a certain Rishi had a son born of a cow (Bk I c 50) while yet another declares that Daksha, one of the mind-born sons of Brahmā had a daughter that gave birth to a cow².

¹ The *Āitareya Brāhmana* definitely claims that the household priest shall have liberty to satisfy his desires in the King's Zanana (Book VIII c 5 HAUG's translation)

² A similar story is told about the god Shiva, and how he became father of Skanda (Book IX, c 44)

The irritability of Brāhmīns and rishis has already been referred to. In illustration of that we find that the 'great and virtuous rishi, Jarat kāru was so angry at his wife for wakening him to say his prayers that he went off and left her altogether. When she humbly protested that she had ventured to waken him because the sun was about to set, the rishi replied that the sun had no power to set as long as he remained asleep. He added that it was not possible for a religious man like him to stay any longer with a woman who had insulted him (Bk I c 47). Sometimes their anger and their curses came home to roost. Nārada once was cursed by a brother rishi, that he should no longer enjoy his old privilege and power of going to heaven whenever he liked. Nārada however cleverly retaliated by condemning his brother never to go to heaven at all, except in his company.¹

The power of asceticism The only earthly rival to the Brāhmīn was the power of asceticism. Gods and Brāhmīns practised that virtue, but demons and ordinary men were able to use it also, often wringing from reluctant deities the things that they desired. Nothing is plainer than the fact that the practice of asceticism was a constant source of worry to the gods. It was impossible for any deity to refuse a boon to an ascetic, if he only kept on long enough, and it was usually to get a boon of some sort that gods and demons and men tortured their bodies and starved their souls. Death the female created by Brahmā for the destruction of man was the greatest of all ascetics,² but the *Mahābhārata* tells of many others who made the heavens hot by their austerities and filled the gods with fear and wonder. Indra in particular was always trembling for his throne and afraid lest some fresh ascetic was planning to deprive him of his place and power as king of heaven. He came to this conclusion for instance, with regard to Vishvāmitra, and resolved to circumvent him. He accordingly

¹ Appendix IV and Note 1

² Appendix III. Her Death was Born

sent for Menakā, one of the celestial nymphs, and bade her go and beguile the ascetic with her beauty and youth. She reminded the god of the great power which Vishvāmitra enjoyed. He had once been a king and was afterwards raised to the rank of a Brāhmin. He had created a river to bathe in, and the river was still running. He had once been so angry with the gods that he had created another world with stars all complete. He could uproot Mt Meru, which was 77,000 miles high, and throw it to a great distance. He could make the earth tremble with a kick. He could if he chose, burn up the world with his glory. What was she, a poor frail woman, to stand before such a holy sage. However India would take no denial, and the maiden had to go. The ascetic fell a victim to her charms. He kept her in his company for many years, and the daughter ultimately born to them was the illustrious maiden Shakuntalā. After the child was born, her mother abandoned her, and went back to heaven. The child was cared for by the birds (Shakuntas). It was thus that she got her name.¹ This may be dismissed as folklore, yet it is stories like these that have helped to maintain the belief of the Indian people even to this day that ascetic practices prevail with heaven and that the motive which prompts them to their devotion does not need to be taken into account. It may be the birth of a son, or the death of an enemy. It is quantity, not quality that tells.²

Moral Teaching. When we pass to the region of ethics, pure and simple, the *Mahābhārata* sets before us a variety and wealth of lofty moral teaching, of which any country and people might well be proud. Indeed at times it denies the value of all rites and ceremonies, and tells us that sacrifice and penance can avail nothing with God compared with the humble and contrite heart. If one hundred horse sacrifices were weighed against truth, truth would be found the heavier. Truth is equal to the study of all the Vedas and

¹ *Mahābhārata*, Bk I c 71

² See the story of Draupada's sacrifice

ablution at all the sacred places (Bk I c 74) There is no virtue greater than truth, no sin greater than falsehood By forgiveness men attain to worlds that are beyond the reach even of Brahmin He that subdues his rising anger by forgiveness is a true man He conquers everything on earth

As the swine seeks for dirt and filth even when it is in a flower garden so does a wicked man choose only evil out of the evil and good that men speak Honest men always feel pain when they have to speak evil of others, but wicked men derive pleasure from it You can see the faults of others, though they be as small as the mustard seed, but you cannot see your own, though they are as big as the Vilm tree You think that you alone know what you did Do you not know that the great Omniscient One dwells in your heart Many other examples are given throughout the following pages and it is worthy of special note that probably the highest teaching which the *Mahābhārata* contains is spoken by a woman (Shakuntalī) and a low caste fowler who earns his livelihood by snaring and killing birds The poem contains few more touching passages, some of which have been quoted above, than those in which Shakuntalī pleads with her husband to recognize her as his lawfully wedded wife It is a woman too who takes a chief part in what is probably the most real and human discussion in the whole poem Draupadī, after the manner of Job's wife, complains bitterly of the injustice of God's dealings None of the speakers are consistent in their opinions throughout, and it would seem that more than one compiler has made use of the incident to insert his own opinions The whole passage (Bk III c 27-34) deserves to be read¹

There is on the other hand a good deal of teaching which is on a much lower moral level This is particularly noticeable, in the advice given to Dhritarāshtra by his family priest, as he discourses on the duties of kings (Bk I c 142) When your enemy is in your

¹ Note 2 The Discussion Between Draupadī and Yudhisthira

hands, kill him by any means, open or secret, show him no mercy, even when he seeks your protection. If your son, brother, friend, father, even your preceptor become your enemy, destroy him by curses, by wealth, by poison or by deceit. Speak soft words before you strike. When you are engaged in a very cruel act, talk with a smile on your lips. He who practices virtue suffers in loss of wealth and pleasure.

The various places of pilgrimage are described at great length in the third book, with the advantages that will accrue from bathing in their sacred waters. It is only at the beginning and the close of the long description, which extends to many pages, that any suggestion is made, as to the need of a pure heart and true motives. The places of pilgrimage themselves possess the healing power just as a sacrifice can secure expiation without any thought of repentance, or an incantation compel a god to listen to and grant a prayer, whatever its purport may be. Kuntī had a charm whereby she was able to call the gods to her side, while Duryodhana's statement, that incantations were able to overcome the gods, stands unreprieved, (Bk V c 61). Omens, portents, auspicious days and the influence of the stars are frequently referred to. At the birth of Duryodhana the omens were so fearful that his father was urged to have him put to death. The infant brayed like an ass, while jackals howled and violent winds began to blow. On the other hand, when Arjuna was born, thousands of drums were heard in the sky and flowers were showered down from heaven. Before the great battle began, rivers changed their course and flowed up hill, unnatural beasts were born, the images of the gods smiled and trembled.

Omens like these betokened evil for the Kuru, while for the Pāndus roads became plain and were divested of prickly grass and thorns.

There is one very interesting passage in the Effort Book (c 35) where we have the higher and lower morality set together and compared by Vidura the low caste uncle of the Kurus and the Pāndus. He says,

'Bathing in all the holy places, and kindness to all creatures—these are equal, perhaps kindness is better'

With regard to the problem of Fate and human freedom, various teachings are given. As in all ages and among all races of men, the unfortunate and the distressed are anxious to shift responsibility to some one else. When the father of the Kurus for instance would blame Destiny as the cause of all his sorrows his charioteer frankly tells him more than once that if he had kept a firmer hand upon his sons and compelled them to obey him he could easily have avoided all his sorrows. The Fowler (Bk III c 208) says that it is only ignorant men who blame the gods for their misfortunes. They ought to recognize that misfortune is the result of our own evil Karma, and that we reap the fruits of our own deeds. The acts done in a former life, produce results in this. The same individual throws doubts on the influence of the stars, by saying that men born under the same stars have very different conditions in life. It is also frequently stated that men can right their wrongs and overcome their misfortunes by means of vigorous action. Draupadi declares that God plays with men as a child plays with his toys. He impels them at one moment to noble at another time to ignoble deeds. Her husband replies that when she talks like that she is little better than an atheist. Draupadi is also made to say that there are three opinions which prevail among men. Some believe in chance, some in providence others say that what happens is due to one's conduct in a previous birth. For herself she thinks that the believer in chance and the believer in destiny are equally foolish. The only praiseworthy person is he who believes in the efficacy of acts.

On the whole, the most prevalent view is that of Yudhisthira who says that the whole universe is at the will of the creator under the control of Fate.

Social Conditions To the modern student perhaps no portions of the poem are more interesting than those which throw light on the social conditions

of ancient India. Beyond the gross exaggerations¹ which the writers felt themselves called upon to employ, one can realize the wealth and prosperity which kings and Brāhmins at least were able to enjoy. The second book gives a glowing description of the splendid tribute which the conquered kings brought to the Pāndus at their new capital of Indraprastha. Of all those who brought tribute, the most interesting are the Mlechchhas (out-castes or foreigners) who lived on the shores of the sea, and brought gems, sandalwood, aloes, cloth, pearls, gold, silver and coral. The people of Chin too contributed woollen blankets, and cloth made of the threads of insects. Western countries offered swords, hatchets and battle axes. Asses that could travel 2000 miles in one day and wild horses as quick as the wind are also spoken of.

The First Book also tells of a boat that could travel like the wind, and was supplied with some sort of mechanism capable of withstanding wind and waves. The following chapter however speaks of its being propelled by boatmen and as helped by both wind and current. Setting aside the statement that Indraprastha had walls as high as Mount Meru, one should note the references to the lofty houses of many stories, the broad streets and gardens, the planting of trees, the making of wells and reservoirs for comfort and pleasure round about the city. King Yudhishthira throughout the poem shows a lively desire to be instructed on the duties of kings, and the administration of a kingdom. A king's first duty is to employ trustworthy ministers and spies. Spies must be employed to find out what the king's friends, enemies and the ascetics are doing. His ministers must be learned in the Shāstras, while his family priest must possess humility and purity of blood. A king should give his soldiers their pay and rations at the right time. Great misery is caused by delay in the payment of wages, and the giving out of rations. Faithful service should be rewarded with an increase of salary. The widows and children of old servants should be sup-

¹ See Note 16, 'The Exaggerations in the *Mahābhārata*.'

ported. The financial condition of the kingdom must be carefully seen to, and accounts properly kept. The people are not to be ruled too severely nor burdened with grievous taxation.

A king should milk his kingdom as a man milks a cow. The burdens he places on the shoulders of his subjects should not be made too heavy all at once. Tanks should be dug at proper places so that the country won't depend entirely on the rains. Advances of money should be made to the cultivators for the purpose of buying seed. Those who lend money at interest must be honest men. Thieves and robbers should be pursued. Precautions against wild beasts, snakes and fires are also enjoined. The basis of wise rule depends on the three Vedas, the employment of priests and the bestowal of gifts on Brāhmins (Bk II c 5). In the Book of Peace Yudhiṣṭhira receives advice from Bhīṣma on the same subject. The aged statesman dwells at great length on the dangers of anarchy and the duty of absolute loyalty and obedience. His anxiety would indicate, did the poem itself not make the fact plain, that India was not unacquainted with the evils of dissension and misrule. Nothing is said about education, but of course constant reference is made to the Vedas and the Vedāṅgas. Manu is spoken of and we are told that the book which he will write on the duties and observances which men ought to follow will be based on a treatise composed by certain Rishis (Bk VII c 336). In another place the Vāyu Purāṇa is referred to as already existing (Bk III c 191) and in the last chapter of the last book 'the eighteen Purāṇas' also. The First Book (c 64) makes it quite clear that no Brāhmin is permitted to sell a copy of the Vedas, or to read them aloud before a Shudra. On the other hand, it is perfectly plain that Shudras were not treated as they are at the present day. The four castes are spoken of after the traditional manner. It is recognized that many mixed castes have already arisen and mixed marriages are spoken of with disapproval. At the same time, however, Rishis and Brāhmins ask for the hands

of kings' daughters in marriage, and kings feel that an honour has been conferred upon them (Bks XII 30, XIII 4)

Vidura was the son of Vyāsa the rishi and a low caste woman. According to present ideas he would rank with the untouchables.¹ Nevertheless when Krishna came to the court of Duryodhana, he preferred to live and eat with Vidura. It should be noted that Vidura is one of the most respected characters in the poem, and he is always found giving wise and honourable advice. Such a state of things is all the more remarkable, in view of the unique position that is claimed for the Brāhmins.

The practice of killing animals for food is both defended and condemned, according to the mood of the different writers who composed the poem. When the Pāndus, attended by thousands of Brāhmins, lived in the forest, they caused so much slaughter among the deer that these animals came and asked them to go and live in another forest. When Yudhishthira and his brothers decided to go to the far off Himālayas at a later stage, and announced that when there they would live entirely on fruits and vegetables, nearly all the Brāhmins returned to Hastināpura, aggrieved at such an ascetic resolution. The miraculous pitcher too, which the Pāndus received from the gods, and which supplied them, according to another story, with all the food they required during their exile, contained meat as one of its ingredients.

The sacrifice of animals, even of cows, in honour of the gods is constantly referred to. It was at the great snake sacrifice of Janamejaya where countless snakes perished that the *Mahābhārata* was first recited. Kings celebrated the horse sacrifice in honour of victory. The gods expiated Indra's sin of killing a Brāhmin by the same sacrifice. Agni became so pale with the butter he had consumed that he had to burn up the Khāndava forest and acquire a renewal of vigour from the great destruction of animals that was

¹ But see the rules of Marriage,

thus involved (Bl I c 226) As to the killing of cows, we read of Bharata that he performed both the cow and the horse sacrifice (Bl I c 71) It is said regarding a pilgrimage to the river Godavari that bathing in its waters yields the same benefits as the sacrifice of a cow (Bl III c 85) In the Drona Book we read of King Krtavirya, who had twenty one thousand cows daily sacrificed to feed his guests (Bl VII c 67) Surely this is a story of real Vedic times when a guest was called a Goghna, or cow killer one for whom a cow was killed In another place we read that when Vaisa received certain gifts including cows he gave an order that the cows must not be slaughtered The Book of Consolation also tells us how King Ashvapati proposed to kill a cow in honour of his guest the god Tishtri, "in accordance with the true ancient and eternal injunction of the Vedas The philosopher Kapila was standing near and unable to restrain himself cried out

Oh ye Vedas (Bl XII c 218) It is in the twelfth and thirteenth books of the *Mahābhārata* that the duty of refraining from all injury to creatures begins to be enforced We are told that the gods are better pleased with the offering of fruits and flowers There is in Book XII (c 338) a most interesting passage in which the Rishis tell the gods that pious men cannot take part in a religion which sanctions the destruction of life When the gods pointed out that *ajras* (goats) were always required, the Rishis replied that in sacrifices certainly they required *ajras*, but *ajras* meant *seeds* as well as *goats* A semi-divine being called Vasu was invited to decide this question as between the gods and rishis Unfortunately Vasu decided in favour of the gods and the sacrifice of animals

There are also several references to human sacrifices Of the pilgrimage to Tamraparna it is said that its waters confer the same benefit as are to be got from a man sacrifice (Bl III c 84) The Forest Book also tells us of a king who sacrificed his only son though he was like the breath of his nostrils to him that his hundred queens might each give birth to a son It is

satisfactory to find that the priest went to hell for performing such a sacrifice. But it will be noticed that though the sacrifice is thus condemned as immoral it accomplished the desired object, because the smell of the burning fat enabled the queens to conceive (Bk III c 27). The wicked Jarāsandha also intended to sacrifice a hundred kings, whom he held as prisoners, to the god Shiva. He was defeated and slain by Krishna, who said that the sacrifice of human beings to the gods had never been heard of. It was treating men as if they were beasts (Bk II c 22). The story of the rishi Agastya, and how he knowingly ate the flesh of a demon called Vātāpi (Bk III c 99) as well as the fact that Bhīma had a Rākshasa son, who presumably ate human flesh like the rest of his mother's people, should not be forgotten. They are characters in the same poem, as the muni Jājali, who was so full of compassion for all living things that he allowed the birds to make nests in his hair (Bk XII c 261).

Position of Women. In the days of the *Mahābhārata* polygamy prevailed among kings and princes. Pāndu had two wives. Arjuna made several marriages, while Krishna had in addition to his eight queens, no less than 16,000 other wives. For the rest of the population however, as at the present day, it is manifest that monogamy prevailed. Not only did it prevail but it was realized that the true home consisted of one wife and her children, that the co-wife was the destroyer of happiness both in this world and the next. A very pretty description of wedded love is put into the mouth of a female pigeon in the Twelfth Book.¹ In the story of the Brāhmin family whose members each strove to be the victim that should be offered to the Rākshasa, we see parental and filial love at its very best,² while the accounts of Sāvitrī's resolve to save her husband, is one of the most touching narratives in all literature.³

We find too that Draupadī exercised great influence over her five husbands, while Kuntī and Gān-

dhārī, the wives of princes, took part in discussions and their advice was listened to. The practice of Sati was sometimes at least observed. Kuntī and Mādri each claimed the right of being burned alive with the dead body of their husband Pāṇdu. It was Mādri alone who performed the rite. Evidently it was not thought right or necessary that both of them should be victims. In after years Kuntī regretted that she had not gone with her husband to heaven. On the other hand four of the wives of Vasudeva, and five of Krishna's ascended the funeral pyre. In explanation of the practice it has to be remembered that a woman was supposed to have only one duty, namely to serve her husband, whom she was bidden to revere and worship as her only god. It is to be regretted that when the writers speak of women in general their language is full of contempt. We should never place any confidence in women and never divulge to them any secret. A woman without a husband will always be liable to be sinful. She who lives even for a moment after her husband lives in great misery and hell. To marry more than one wife is not a sin for men. But it is very sinful for a woman to take a second husband after the first (Bk I c 160)¹. For a woman to die before her husband is an act of the highest merit. To be ever engaged in serving their husbands is a higher duty for a woman than sacrifices, asceticism and vows. The Vedas have declared that whether the act be sinful or not a woman should always do what her husband commands (Bk I c 122). It is the Book of Precepts however which has the lowest opinion of women kind. The old bachelor Bhishma is made to express himself as follows. It is only because they are not solicited, or because they are afraid of their relatives that women do not indulge in immorality. Women are highly fickle. They always hanker after new companions. Even though treated with great respect and love by their husbands women prefer the society of other men, hunchbacks and idiots, it is all the same to them. The Destroyer is never

¹ But see Damayanti's proposal to marry again.

satiated with killing living creatures, and women are never satiated with men. They make a lie appear as truth, and truth look like a lie. It is questionable if any man alive can restrain them within the limits of virtue. In a former creation women were all virtuous while men attained the rank of gods. It was to rob them of their divinity that women were in this creation endowed with carnal desires, that they might tempt and deceive men. The sacred scriptures declare that there is no holy book for women to follow, that they are living lies, fond of disagreeable words and devoid of everything that is respectable and right (Bk XIII c 38-43). When men held such views it is not to be wondered at that the Parda system prevailed. We read that Draupadī appeared in public properly veiled. When she was called to the assembly (Bk II c 69) she declared that it was only at her Svayamvara that men had looked on her face. When the old blind king went to the forest, ladies who had never seen the sun or the moon came out into the streets to show their sorrow (Bk XV c 15). The practice of Svayamvara, however shows that women among the Kshatriyas at least were permitted to choose their own husbands, though Krishna declares that marriage by capture is the most highly approved of all. There are a number of indications that marriage frequently did not take place before the age of puberty was reached. While it is distinctly stated that in the golden age men never married a woman till she had reached womanhood, with the result that the earth was populated with long-lived people, free from disease and sorrow (Bk I c 64). In gloomy contrast we have a picture of the present evil age in the Third Book (c 188) where we are told that girls of seven and eight give birth to children, and boys of ten or twelve beget offspring. The result is that by the time he is sixteen a man has grown weak and old.

In dealing with the subject of women, it is impossible to pass over the fact that Draupadī is declared to have been the common wife of the five Pāndu brothers. It is said that this unnatural marriage took place that

their mother's command to enjoy in common what they had brought home might not be rendered false. When the Pāndus brought home the bride of Arjuna they called to her to come and see what they had gained. Little dreaming that it was a woman she replied to them in the language described above. The maiden's father was shocked when he found that his daughter was to be married to the five brothers. He knew that a man might have many wives. He had never known of a woman having more than one husband. Both Vjāsa and Yudhisthira quoted cases of women being married to more than one husband. It was finally justified, not as a usual but as a most unusual event on the ground that in a previous life Draupadi had asked Shiva five times for a husband but particularly for this good and efficient reason that the five Pāndus were really one and the same person, because they were incarnations of the four old Indras and a part of the then reigning one (B1 I c 199).

Religious Observances With regard to the religious customs of the Hindus in the time of the *Mahābhārata* reference has already been made to their pilgrimages, the practice of asceticism, the offering of gifts to Brāhmins, and of sacrifices to the gods. To these should be added the conviction that a man can not obtain salvation unless he has had a son born to him who will make offerings to the spirits of his ancestors, the similar belief that an unmarried woman cannot enter heaven (B1 IX c 52), the duty of a Brāhmin (a privilege open to other castes) of spending a part of his life in the forest.

It is remarkable that the references to temples are very few, and even the few are made in a casual manner. We are told that yajals howled within the temples of the gods when the Pāndus were driven into exile. There is a similar remarkable absence of reference to images or image worship. In one place, and again with regard to evil omens, it is said that in view of the approaching slaughter, when the battle between the Pāndus and Kurus began, the images of the gods and

goddesses smiled and trembled. They vomited and perspired, and sometimes fell down (Bk VI c 2). The phallic emblem of Shiva is however once or twice referred to, and in another place we are told that Arjuna began to make a clay image of that god, with a view to his worship. Probably the need of images was not felt very strongly by the heroes, in view of the fact that the gods appeared to them so often, face to face. As has been already pointed out, the writers of the *Māhābharata* not seldom try to raise the thoughts of their readers above ritual and all external observance. Book XII gives many illustrations of this. There the practice of rites and the doctrines of the Vedas are set in contrast with the new ideas of philosophic Hinduism. Sons are found who tell their fathers that they do not need descendants to deliver them from hell, devotees are told that clothes of bark and shaven heads do not make a man a saint; pilgrims are assured that their visits to holy places are all in vain, and householders are bidden not to yearn for the forest, because even in the forest the Yogin does not get rid of desire. 'The ancient morality which everybody knows is kindness and friendliness to man and beast. By self-control and renunciation alone is it possible for man to save his soul.'

The Book of Consolation (Bk 12) is very long and often very tedious, but it should be read in full. It sets forth with great impartiality the teaching of those who kept to the old paths, and those who were venturing out on the new, those who believed in 'action', and those who refrained from action, those who declared that neglect of the Vedas would plunge a man into hell, and those who, with difficulty concealing their contempt for the Vedas, were persuaded that the heaven of the old-fashioned Hindu was little better than hell.

That these divergences of thought and teaching still prevail in India, every one is well aware. But a study of the Epic will only confirm once more the truth of the ancient saying, that what is not in the *Māhābhārata* is not in Bharata.

The Book of Beginnings

THIS book gives an account of the origin of the poem the genealogy of the two families and the rivalries between them

Introduction The author of the Mahābhārata was Vyāsa who also arranged the Vedas. He was very anxious to get somebody to write it down but declared that no one on earth was worthy of such a task. It contained the mystery of the Vedas and the Upanishads. It included a compilation of all the Purānas with every thing that man ought to know of things on earth and in heaven. Brahmā appeared and told him that the god Ganesha would be his scribe. Ganesha agreed on condition that his pen was not allowed to stop for a moment. Vyāsa himself however repeated it to his disciple Vāishampāyana, and he in turn recited it at a snake sacrifice conducted by Janamejaya king of Hastināpura. At this sacrifice Vyāsa himself was present. Janamejaya was the great grandson of Arjuna one of the five Pāndu brothers, who were themselves the grandsons of Vyāsa. The story, as we have it is told by Śruti son of Lomaharshana to a number of Rishis. Śruti had been present at the snake sacrifice. He told his hearers that the poem had at first contained only 24 000 verses, but afterwards grew to 600 000 even more verses being known in the land of the Pitris (fathers). One verse read with reverence wipes out all sins. When the gods weighed the book against the four Vedas, they found it the heavier. Śruti gives a long summary of the eighteen books into which the poem is divided and tells a great variety of stories, before proceeding to the main narrative.

The daughters of Prajapati. In the golden age (Krita Yuga)¹ Prajāpati² had two daughters, Kadru and Vinatā, married to the Rishi Kashyapa. Their husband was so pleased with them, that he granted them each a boon. Kadru asked to have a thousand snakes born to her. Vinatā wished to have only two sons, but they were to be equal in strength to those of Kadru. After a long time Kadru gave birth to 1,000 eggs, and Vinatā to two. The eggs were placed in warm vessels and kept for 500 years, at the end of which Kadru's 1,000 sons were born. Jealous of her sister's priority, Vinatā got impatient, and broke one of her eggs. Out of it came, imperfectly developed, a son called Atru, who became charioteer to the Sun. The newly born child cursed his mother, for her impatience, saying she would become her sister's slave. He also bade her keep the other egg untouched for 5,000 years. At the end of that time, there emerged from it Garuda, the king of birds, and the great enemy of the snake race.

The Churning of the Ocean. One day the gods resolved to go in search of Amrit, the drink which confers immortality. They learned from Vishnu that it was hidden in the Ocean. Under his instructions, they uprooted Mt. Mandara, 11,000 yojanas high,³ and using it as a churning stick, Vāsuki the serpent king as a rope, and the king of the Tortoises as a support, they churned the Ocean. Out of it came, Dhanvantari the physician of the gods. In his hands he had a vessel containing the amrit. The Dānavas and Daityas (demons) who were present got hold of the vessel, and were about to drink the amrit, and thus acquire immortality. Vishnu however suddenly assumed the form of a lovely female, and began to make love to them. In their devotion to the lady they forgot the

¹ The Krita Yuga was the first of the four ages of the world. It lasted for 1,728,000 years. The present age Kali-Yuga is to last for 430,000 years.

² See Note 3. Prajāpati. This Prajāpati was really Daksha, the son of Brahmā.

³ A yojana is about seven miles.

amrit, which the other gods at once seized. When the gods began to drink, Rāhu a demon in the guise of a celestial, insinuated himself among them, and managed to get some. He was discovered by Surya and Chandra, the Sun and Moon, and the fact was reported to Vishnu. That god at once cut Rāhu in two with his discus. Thus arose Rāhu's hatred for the Sun and Moon, whom from time to time he tries to swallow, and in his effort causes the temporary eclipses of these two bodies. A great fight between the gods and demons ensued, in which the gods were finally victorious. The amrit was taken to heaven and jealously guarded. A wheel as sharp as a razor revolved round it incessantly.¹ At the churning of the Ocean poison was also produced. This Shiva swallowed to save creation. He held the poison in his throat, and from that day he has been called Nilanth (blue throat). Another product was the horse Uchehrushrava. Kadru and Vinatā laid a wager as to the colour of its tail. Kadru said it was black, Vinatī said it was white. The loser was to become the other's slave. When Kadru found that she was wrong she told her 1,000 sons to change themselves into black hairs and cover the tail. This they refused to do and their mother cursed them, saying that they would all be consumed in the great sacrifice of King Janamejaya. The snakes alarmed by their mother's curse and wishing to evade it, decided to do her bidding and changed themselves into black hairs on the horse's tail, with the result that Vinatā became their mother's slave.

The Story of Garuda About this time, Vinatā's second son Garuda, after 5,000 years of incubation broke the shell and emerged so large in size and so full of splendour that the gods became alarmed. They went in a body, and sought to gain his favour by giving him the name of one god after another, including that of the Supreme Lord. Despite his greatness, Garuda was involved in his mother's bondage to her sister Kadru, and

¹ See Genesis iii 4

her family of snakes. He is told however that if he brings them some of the amrit from heaven he and his mother will be set free. Before setting out Garuda asks his mother for something to eat. She tells him to go and eat up a wild tribe of people called Nishādas. By creating a great wind he draws thousands of these unfortunates into his mouth. In doing so, however, he also swallowed a Brāhmin and his Nishāda wife. He had been warned by his mother not to swallow a Brāhmin by any chance, because, if he did so, the holy man would burn his stomach like fire. This indeed happened, and when the Brāhmin demanded delivery for himself and his wife also, Garuda was very glad to let them both out. He next paid a visit to his father, the rishi Kashyapa¹. As he was still hungry his father told him of an elephant six yojanas in height, and a tortoise ten yojanas in circumference. Having seized one in either claw, he carried them to a tree one hundred yojanas high. The branch on which he settled broke under his weight. He then flew to a mountain 100,000 yojanas away and devoured both elephant and tortoise there. In a previous birth they had been brothers and rishis. But having quarrelled over their inheritance they cursed one another, to be born in the forms in which Garuda found them. When Garuda reached heaven, and tried to get the amrit a great fight took place, in which the gods were badly mangled, and much blood was shed. A compromise however was arrived at. Garuda and Indra, the king of the celestials, became friends. Garuda also agreed to act as the vehicle of Vishnu. Garuda said that in fulfilment of his promise, and to get freedom for himself and his mother, he must take the amrit to the snakes, but he would not let them drink it. On his return to earth he placed the amrit before the snakes, but told them that before drinking it they must go and bathe. They did so, and in their absence Indra appeared and carried off the amrit. When they came back, the snakes licked the Kusha grass on which the

¹ Kashyapa was one of the seven great Rishis and said to be a grandson of Brahmā.

amrit had been placed. By doing so, their tongues were slit, while the kusha grass became sacred through being in contact with amrit. One of the chief snakes, Shesha, grew tired of his wicked brothers and began to practice great austerities. As a reward, Brahmā appointed him to bear the earth on his head. The other snakes, however, were still burdened by their mother's curse. It will be remembered that Vāsuki, one of their number, had done the gods a favour by acting as the rope at the churning of the Ocean. The gods accordingly went with him to Brahmā, who is constantly addressed as the Grandsire, and asked Brahmā to devise some means of deliverance. Brahmā replied that only the poisonous snakes would suffer while those that were virtuous, i.e. harmless, would escape. The special means of their salvation was to be an ascetic called Astika, who would persuade Janamejaya to stop his snake sacrifice.

The Story of Jaratkāru Astika was the son of an ascetic, named Jaratkāru, who wandered over the world refusing to marry. One day he saw his ancestors hanging head downwards over a great hole. They were suspended from the branch of a tree by a rope, every strand of which except one had been eaten by rats that lived near. When questioned by Jaratkāru why they were in such a perilous position, they answered that their descendant Jaratkāru refused to marry, and that until he had a son, they could not hope to be delivered. In great confusion Jaratkāru confessed that he was their guilty descendant, and promised to marry if he could get a wife in a gift, and one bearing the same name as himself. After a long search, Vāsuki fulfilled the conditions by offering his sister. They were married, and Astika was born. A son is called Putra, because he saves from Put (Hell).

Death of King Parikshit We now come to the special event that led to the snake sacrifice. Parikshit

NOTE. It is said that Indra once insulted certain Rishis, and that Garuda was created to be Indra's rival and dispossess him of his throne. Eventually Indra promised not to insult a Brahmin again.

was the grandson of Arjuna. When the five Pāndu brothers retired from the world, he became king of Hastināpura. One day, when out hunting, he wounded a deer. Going in search of it he saw a rishi, named Samika, and asked him if he had seen it. The rishi was observing a vow of silence, and made no reply. The king, tired and hungry, grew angry, and taking up a dead snake that was lying on the ground, he put it round the rishi's neck. The rishi said not a word, but when his son, Srīnga, who was born from a cow, came home and saw how his father had been insulted, he cursed the king, saying, 'Behold my ascetic powers, within seven days the king will be bitten by Takshaka,' (one of the snake sons of Kadru). The older rishi was distressed at his son's curse, and sent a messenger to warn the king of his danger. A palace was erected on a lofty pillar, and it was carefully guarded night and day. Despite every precaution, however, on the seventh day the snake got in. It was concealed as an insect in a basket of fruit. When the king saw the insect, he picked it up and in jest told it to bite him, placing it on his head. The insect was Takshaka the snake. With a loud roar, he coiled himself round the neck of the king, and having bitten that protector of the world disappeared through the sky. It is said that Kashyapa the rishi was on his way to save the king by means of his skill in charms, and thus gain both wealth and virtue. Takshaka, who it will be remembered was his son, intervened, however, with the offer of greater wealth, if he would stay at home, and he went no further.

The Great Snake Sacrifice. When Janamejaya, Parikshit's son, heard of his father's death he resolved to perform a snake sacrifice in which all the 1,000 sons of Kadru, with Takshaka at their head should perish. Famous Brāhmins and rishis were summoned. By their mantras, and by pouring great quantities of ghee into the fire, they compelled snakes in hundreds of thousands to come and cast themselves into the flames. The fat and marrow of the snakes flowed like rivers, and the whole atmosphere was filled with an intolerable

ble stench. The snakes were of many shapes and sizes: some were only a span in length; others were seven miles long. This great calamity came upon the whole snake race, because Kadru's sons had at first refused to obey her, and she had cursed them. It is declared that a curse cannot fail. It is at this point that Astika, son of Jaratāru the ascetic, appears on the scene. His mother was a snake and she bids him go and use his great ascetic power. He went to the sacrifice accordingly, and so flattered the ling saying that he was equal to the gods to Varuna and Indra and Vishnu that he bade him ask a boon. Astika asked that the sacrifice should be stopped. The ling offered him any other boon but he refused. The sacrifice thus came to an end and the remaining snakes were saved.

As stated above Vyāsa was present at this sacrifice, and at the ling's request caused his disciple to recite the story of the Mahābhārata to the people gathered there.

The Birth of Vyasa The wonderful story of Vyāsa's birth is told at this stage. There was a king called Uparichara, king of Chedi, so devoted to asceticism that the gods feared he was seeking to rob them of their power. They accordingly sent Indra to bribe him with the offer of a crystal car capable of carrying him through the sky, a privilege designed for him alone of all mortals. One day in spring his semen virilis fell into a river.¹ It was swallowed by a female fish with the result that ten months after, when the fish was caught by a fisherman, two children a boy and a girl came forth. The fisherman told the ling of his wonderful find. The ling took possession of the boy, but left the girl to be reared by the fisherman's wife. The girl was very beautiful, but she had a fishy smell. Her name was Satyawati. She often helped her foster father, who acted as a ferryman on the river Jumna.

¹ It is similarly told of Drona that he was born from a bucket and of Kṛpā and his sister that they came into existence through contact with a clod of earth.

One day she was ferrying across the river, the rishi Parāshara. The rishi persuaded the girl to yield to his embraces by promising that she should remain a virgin. She also made a condition, that she should lose her fishy smell. She became so sweet smelling that the fragrance could be smelt seven miles away. A child was born, and because he was born on an island, he was called Dwaipāyana or Island-born. He is called Vyāsa, because he arranged the Vedas.

The Lunar Race. The Pāndus and Kuruś belonged to the Lunar Race,¹ and a number of stories are told of the more famous of their ancestors. Yayāti was fifth in descent from the Moon god. He was cursed by his father-in-law with the infirmity of old age, because he co-habited with his wife's maid. Unable to endure the loss of his sensual pleasures, he asked each of his five sons to exchange their youth with his old age. His youngest son, Puru, consented to do so, for the period of a 1,000 years. At the end of that time, Yayāti recognized that no amount of pleasures can ever satisfy a man's desire, and handed over the kingship to Puru. He retired to a forest, and after many years of great asceticism went to heaven. There he lived for millions of years, sporting with the Apsarases, but eventually, because of the way he boasted that nobody had equalled him in ascetic merit Indra hurled him down to earth. Some very good moral teaching on the dangers of pride, and the duty of forgiveness, was imparted to Astika by Yayāti, during his second stay on earth.

The Story of Shukra. One of Yayāti's fathers-in-law was Shukra, a Brāhmin. He was priest to the Asuras, or demons. When they fought with the gods, Shukra had the power to restore to life the demons who were killed in battle. This Brihaspati, the priest of the gods, was not able to do. So many gods were being killed in this long drawn out battle for the sovereignty of the three worlds that they sent Kacha,

¹ See Note 4. The Lunar Race,

the son of Brihaspati¹ to go and live with Shukra as a disciple, and discover the secret of his power. After spending 500 years with Shukra Kacha's object was discovered by the demons. Twice they put him to death. On the first occasion they gave his body to the jekals, on the second they pounded it to powder and threw it into the Ocean. But each time he was restored to life when Shukra called him. The third time that the demons killed him they burned his body to ashes and to punish Shukra for his interference with their plans mixed the ashes in Shukra's liquor. When Shukra called for his disciple soon after he was greatly surprised to hear him answer feebly from within his own stomach. Shukra was in a great difficulty. To deliver Kacha would mean the ripping open of his own stomach and his own death. But Shukra was so angry with the demons for involving him in the awful crime of killing a Brāhmaṇ that he conferred the power of restoring the dead to life upon Kacha. Having done so he bade Kacha to come forth and himself died as a result. But Kacha at once exercised his newly given power and restored his guru to life. Shukra uttered a curse against any Brāhmaṇ who should taste liquor from that day saying that his sin would be equal to that of killing a Brāhmaṇ. Having accomplished his purpose Kacha returned to heaven to the great joy of the celestials who at once resumed their war with the demons.

Dushmanta and Shakuntala Dushmanta lived eleven generations after Yayāti. It is said that he was the protector of the whole earth and had sway even over the country of the Mlechchhas. In his reign all men were virtuous and fulfilled the duties of their own castes. There was no fear of thieves or of famine or of diseases. Dushmanta was equal in strength to Vishnu and could raise up on his arms Mt. Mandara, which was 77 000 miles high. His marriage with Shakuntalā is the subject of the well known drama composed by

¹ Brihaspati is the planet Jupiter or its regent. Shukra is the planet Venus.

Kālīdāsa. Shakuntalā was the daughter of the king-rishi Vishvāmitra and the heavenly nymph Menakā. Indra was afraid that Vishvāmitra, as a result of his asceticism, would dispossess him of his power in heaven, and sent Menakā to lead him from the paths of virtue. The nymph was successful, and Shakuntalā was born. Abandoned by her parents, the baby, after being cared for by some vultures, was found by the Rishi Kanwa, who brought her up in his hermitage as his daughter. Dushmanta one day saw the girl at the hermitage, and was so struck with her beauty, that he wished to marry her at once. The Gandhaiva ceremony—a declaration of mutual acceptance—was gone through. Shakuntalā however insisted that her son should be recognized as the heir apparent. Dushmanta before leaving her gave her a ring as a pledge that he would keep his word. When the son was born he was called Bharata. At the age of six, he was so strong that he could bind tigers and elephants to the trees of the hermitage. The Rishi Kanwa, after some years, told her to go to the king. The king at once recognized her, but nevertheless denied all knowledge of her claims. This leads to some very pathetic and moral utterances on the part of Shakuntalā, e.g. 'What is a greater happiness to a father than when he sees his son running to him and clasping his knees with his little arms, though his body is full of dust and dirt? Honest men always feel pain to speak ill of others. Oh king, you can see the faults of others, though they be as small as the mustard seed. But you cannot see your own, though they are as big as the Vilva fruit'.¹ Even atheists are afraid of those who have fallen from truth. Truth is heavier than one hundred horse sacrifices'. Then a voice was heard from heaven telling the king to cherish his son and not insult his wife. The king explained that fearing the people would be suspicious of the purity of his son's birth, he had waited for this confirming voice from heaven.²

¹ Cf. Matthew, 7. 3

² Another rendering says that Shakuntalā lost the ring and that because she had failed to salute Durvāsa a sage with a very hasty temper, he had cursed her to be forgotten by her lover.

Bharata When he became King Bharata conquered all the kingdoms of the world and gained the title of Chalravartī, or universal Emperor. He performed not only horse, but also cow sacrifices. His descendants were called Bhāratas and the country got the name of Bhāratavarsha.

Of many of these kings we are told that they conquered the earth, offered many sacrifices, and gave great gifts to Brāhmins. One of them was Hastin, who reigned over Hastinīpura not far from Delhi. Another was Kuru whose name is applied to the cousins of the Pāndus.

Shantanu We pass on however to Shantanu. He had two wives: first the goddess Gangā and then Śatyavatī, the Kshatriya's adopted daughter and the mother of Vyāsa. One day on the banks of the Ganges Shantanu saw a woman of matchless beauty whom he at once asked to be his wife. She agreed on the condition that he should never interfere with anything she did, saying that the day he did so she would leave him for ever. Seven children were born to them, but each and all were immediately thrown into the river. When the eighth child was born Shantanu could contain himself no longer and called his wife a murderess. In response Gangā said that she would spare the child, but that she could stay with him no longer. She explained however the cause of her apparently inhuman conduct. The eight children were in reality the Vasus, the eight celestial attendants of the god Indra. When the Kṛishṇa Vasishtha¹ was engaged in prayer, they had passed between him and the sun. In a rage Vasishtha cursed them to be born among men. At their request Gangā had taken a human form to become their mother and once they were born they had been freed from the curse. She had thrown them into the river, that they might thus immediately return to heaven. Shantanu on the other hand had been greatly favoured, and had acquired great heavenly bliss by

¹ See Note 5. Vasishtha

being then earthly father¹ Gangā took the rescued boy with her, but some years after, Shantanu, when walking by the Ganges, saw that the river had suddenly become shallow. He then observed a beautiful youth diving back the waters of the river by means of a multitude of arrows. Gangā the goddess then appeared, and told Shantanu that the boy was his own son. The father took him home, and made him heir to his throne giving him the name of Devadatta. He was afterwards known as Bhīshma, the terrible, and is a most prominent figure throughout the story. Four years after, this time on the banks of the Jumna, Shantanu met his second wife, Satyawati. His attention was first attracted by the sweet perfume, with which her body had been endowed (p. 31). When he saw the fisherman who had adopted her, he could only get his consent to a marriage on the condition that if a son were born, he should be made heir apparent. This Shantanu would not agree to, as he had already appointed his son, Devadatta, the son of Gangā, to that position. He returned very distressed in mind to Hastināpura. When Devadatta or Bhīshma discovered the cause of his father's sorrow, he took a vow never to accept the throne, nor to marry nor to have children. When the fisherman got this assurance, he gladly gave his daughter in marriage to the king.

The Birth of Dhritrāshtra, Pandu and Vidura.

Shantanu had two sons by Satyawati. Both of them died childless, but the younger left two wives, Ambikā and Ambālikā, the daughters of the king of Kāshi (Benares). Their mother-in-law, Satyawati, called upon her step-son Bhīshma to raise up children through them, but he refused on account of his vow. Her step-son having failed her, she then thought of her son Vyāsa, born before her marriage to Shantanu. This

¹ Another explanation of the curse is as follows. A daughter of Dakṣha married Kaśyapa the Rishi, and gave birth to a cow. The person who drank the milk of this cow remained young for 10,000 years. It became the property of the Rishi Vasishtha. The Vasus stole it, and in consequence were cursed by its owner. See also page 46.

was considered a quite meritorious act' Vyāsa however had a very repulsive appearance, and a very disagreeable smell. When the elder queen Ambikā was brought to Vyāsa, she was so alarmed at his horrible aspect that she closed her eyes in terror with the result that the child she gave birth to was blind. He was called Dhritarāshtra. When Ambālikā, the second queen saw Vyāsa she became pale with fear her son Pāndu in consequence was of a pale complexion. Vyāsa sought the embraces of Ambikā a second time, she sent instead her slave girl. Vyāsa was pleased with his reception, and declared that her son should be both fortunate and virtuous. This child was named Vidura. It is said that Vidura was Dharma the god of Justice born of a low caste woman, as the result of a curse put upon him by a Rishi.

Marriages As Dhritarāshtra was blind he could not ascend the throne. Pāndu was therefore made king. During his minority Bhishma acted as regent. It was Bhishma's duty to find wives for his nephews. Having heard that Gāndhārī daughter of the king of Gāndhāra, had been promised a hundred sons by the god Shiva, he proposed marriage to her father. When Gāndhārī heard that her future husband was blind, she bandaged her eyes, and remained so through her life that she might not be wanting in respect to her husband. Pāndu had two wives Prithā or Kuntī, daughter of the Yadu prince who ruled at Mathurā on the Jumna and Mādri, sister of the king of Madra. When Kuntī was a girl she so pleased the Rishi Durvāsa that he told her that she could obtain a child by calling up any god she pleased. In her innocent curiosity, the maiden resolved to test the truth of the Rishi's word, by calling up the Sun. To her surprise that deity at once appeared. It was only when he

¹ Bhishma tells how when Parashurama the incarnate of Vishnu exterminated the Kshatriya race entirely one time the Brahmins went to the childless widows and not lawfully but from pure motives raised up offspring to the warriors who had been slain.

assured her that she would be committing no sin, and that her maidenhood would be restored to her, that she yielded to the god's embrace. A wonderful child, afterwards known as Karna was born. The infant was clothed in armour from his birth, and was destined to be the bitter foe of his half-brothers, the five sons of Pāṇdu. Afraid of what the world would say, Kuntī placed her child in a basket¹ and committed it to a river. It was found by a charioteer, and adopted by him and his wife. At a Svayamvara, in which the woman chooses her husband, Kuntī chose Pāṇdu from among many suitors. The other wife Mādrī was obtained in exchange for much gold and gems, horses and elephants. We are told that Pāṇdu defeated in battle all the kings of the world. He brought back to his capital, wealth without end and celebrated five great sacrifices, in which he made great gifts to hundreds of thousands of Brāhmins, enough to furnish an hundred horse-sacrifices.

Birth of Dhritarashtra's Children. Gāndhārī, Dhritarāshtra's queen, after two years gave birth to a hard mass of flesh which she was about to throw away. But Vyāsa appeared and caused an hundred pots filled with ghee to be brought. The mass of flesh was divided into an hundred pieces, and placed in the hundred pots. After two years according to Vyāsa's instructions, the pots were opened, and thus one hundred sons were born. When Duryodhana the eldest son came forth, he brayed like an ass, while jackals howled on every side. Vidura and others urged the father to destroy such an ill-omened son, saying that he would have ninety-nine left, but he refused, though he was told that the world should be abandoned for the sake of a soul.

Pandu cursed and his death. When hunting in a forest Pāṇdu one day saw a deer sporting with his mate, and shot them both. The deer proved to be a great Rishi, and with his dying breath he cursed Pāṇdu

¹ Compare Exodus 2, 3.

saying that he also should die in the act of embracing one of his wives. Up to this time Pāndu had no children, and afraid of the Rishis' curse he could not hope to have any. But that he might not be shut out of heaven, he asked Kuntī to raise up children through some Brāhmin. When Kuntī objected Pāndu said that when a wife could not get a son in the proper way it was her duty to get one somehow that the lawgiver Manu had approved of such a practice, and that even were it a sin a wife must obey her husband. He added that until only very recently women had acted like the birds and beasts, and their conduct was not only not considered sinful but approved by the great Rishis. Kuntī then told her husband of the charm she had received by which she could have children from the gods. In this way, she gave birth to three sons: Yudhishthira by Dharma, Bhīma by Vāyu, and Arjuna by Indra. On the day Bhīma was born he fell on a mountain, and broke it to pieces. At Arjuna's birth the gods and other celestials came to show their joy.

When Pāndu saw that his second wife Mādrī was grieved that she had no children, he asked Kuntī to give the use of her charm to Mādrī. To this Kuntī agreed and Mādrī thought of the Ashvins. They appeared at once and two sons were born called Nakula and Sahadeva. One day not longer after, Pāndu forgot the curse that was upon him, and sought to embrace his wife Mādrī with the result that he died in her arms. The body was burned at Hastināpura, and after a contest as to who should mount the funeral pyre, Mādrī obtained the privilege of performing Sati. Satyawatī the grandmother of Pāndu and her two daughters in law Ambikā and Ambālikā retired to the forest. They did so, on the advice of Vyāsa, that in their old age they might not witness the destruction of their race.

Fends between the Pandus and Kurus When the sons of Pāndu came to Hastināpura, they were kindly

received by their uncle, the blind Dhritarāshtra. The Rishis told him of the divine origin of his nephews. Before long, however, strife broke out between them and their hundred cousins, who will now be referred to as the Kauravas or Kurus.

The Pāndus excelled in all games of strength and skill. Bhīma, who was called Vrikodāta, Wolf's belly, because he ate so much, helped to provoke the strife, by playing all kinds of boyish pranks on his cousins. He would seize them by the hair and pull them along the ground. He would bind ten of them together and throw them into the water, only rescuing them when they were half drowned. Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kurus, bitterly resented this treatment, and it is said that from ignorance and ambition he resolved to kill Bhīma. He gave him poisoned food and threw him into the Ganges. There he sank till he reached the dwelling place of the Nāgas or snakes. Thousands of Nāgas at once attacked Bhīma, but instead of killing him their poison neutralized the poison he had got from Duryodhana. When the snakes complained of their unwelcome visitor to Vāsuki their king, he told them that they ought to be pleased as he also was of the snake race, Kunti's grandfather Arka, being still alive in the land of the Nāgas. The old snake Arka was sent for, and embraced Bhīma, his great-great grandson. At his request Bhīma was given a liquor to drink, which imparted the strength of 10,000 elephants. After sleeping for eight days, he was conveyed back to his home by the Nāgas. When Yudhishthira and his brothers realized the plots against them, they determined to keep entirely silent, but to guard one another with great care. Many attempts were made to destroy the Pāndus, but they all failed.

Drona appointed Teacher. Drona was a great expert in the use of weapons. He was the son of a famous Rishi.¹ The old king appointed him as teacher to his five nephews and one hundred sons. The pupil who

¹ See p. 31 for his birth,

made most progress was Arjuna and because he saved his teacher from a crocodile while bathing in the Ganges Drona gave him an irresistible weapon, called Brahmashira which was only to be used against non human foes. It is also said of Arjuna that he became a great ear warrior, able to fight alone against 60 000 men. When Drona considered that the princes had completed their education he asked the king to have a public display of their prowess. On an auspicious day, great crowds of people came in their gayest attire men and women of the four castes and all the ladies of the royal household to the place that had been prepared. Many contests took place. The chief feature however was an exhibition by Arjuna. He created fire by the Agneya weapon, water by the Varuna weapon, by the Vajra weapon, by the Parjanya clouds by the Bhumi weapon land, by the Parvata mountains were created by the Antardhina he made them disappear.

When this display was over a great noise was heard at the gate, an unknown candidate for fame appeared and offered to do all that Arjuna had done. Arjuna scornfully told him that he was not wanted but when his jealous cousins saw that he might get the better of Arjuna they eagerly supported the stranger and the stranger fulfilled his boast. He then challenged Arjuna to single combat. When told to state his lineage that princes never fought with men of low birth the stranger was put to shame for all men supposed him to be the son of a charioteer and Arjuna scornfully bade him take a whip in his hand, and not a sword. Duryodhana however came to the rescue and appointed the stranger king of Anga and caused the royal umbrella to be held over his head. The dispute however had lasted so long, that before it ended darkness fell, and the assembly dispersed. The mysterious stranger was Karna (p. 37) the son who had been born to Kunti when she summoned the Sun god to her side before her marriage with Pandu. Karna and Arjuna were thus half brothers. During the quarrel their respective fathers Surya the Sun god,

and India, the king of heaven, looked on from above, while their common mother Kuntī was so excited that she fainted away. She told her secret, however, to no one.

Draupada Conquered. It was time for Drona to claim his fee. In his youth, he had been insulted by the king of Panchāla and he asked that the princes should invade that country, and bring the king to him. The prince agreed, defeated Draupada the king and brought him to Drona. His life was spared, but Drona made himself king of half his territory.

Yudhisthira made Heir-apparent. Not long after Dhritarāshtra made Yudhisthira, the eldest of his nephews, heir apparent. (It is not clear why he passed over his one hundred sons.) Within a short time he and his brothers surpassed all that their father, Pāndu, had done. Arjuna conquered the Yavanas¹. Two of the brothers, along with Bhīma, in a single car, invaded the East, and subdued all the kings of that country, who came against them in 10,000 cars. Arjuna again went to the south and, in a single car, conquered the whole of that country. He brought back immense booty. These great successes suddenly poisoned the king's mind against his nephews, and he became so miserable that he could not sleep.

Precepts for Kings. When he consulted the prime minister, as to what he should do, he got the following advice: 'When your enemy is in your power destroy him by any means, open or secret. Do not show him any mercy, though he seek your protection. First gain the confidence of men, and then spring upon them, like a wolf. If your son, friend, brother, father, or even your preceptor become your enemy, you should destroy him by guises, by incantations, by gifts, by poison or by deception. When you are engaged in doing a very cruel act, you should talk with a smile on your lips. By virtue a man loses both wealth and pleasure.'

¹ Most likely the Macedonian or Bactrian Greeks on the North West Frontier of India,

The jealousy and anger of the Kurus and their father were further roused by the desire of the people to see Yudhishthira the oldest Pāndu made king.

Conspiracy to destroy the Pandus The Pāndus were invited to go to a place called Vīranāṣṭa to attend a festival. Though they knew the motive for the invitation they agreed to go. At that place a palace had been erected for their reception. It was built of hemp resin, oil and fire. When the Pāndus were asleep it was to be set on fire and the people told that they had perished through accident. Before the princes left Hastināpura Vidura speaking to the eldest brother in the Mlechchha language told him of the plot and bade him take precautions. When they reached their destination they at once set about making a subterranean passage by which to escape. They were allowed to live on in the palace for some time, to allay suspicion. But one night Kuntī and her five sons entertained a number of Brāhmins and ladies. Impelled by fate a Nishāda woman and her five sons also came, and intoxicated with liquor the woman and her sons became drunk and incapable. Purochana, who had been sent by the Kurus to watch for an opportunity was also in the palace that night. Bhīma seized the opportunity himself and after everybody had left except the Nishāda woman her sons and Purochana the five brothers set fire to the building. The whole town was roused and when the people saw the dead body of, as they believed, Kuntī and her five sons, there was great lamentation. One satisfaction they had when they found that Purochana had also perished. The deaths of his nephews and their mother were reported to the king, and he caused their funeral rites to be duly performed.

The Flight of the Pandus The Pāndus were now fugitives but they were so paralysed with sleep and fear that Bhīma had to carry not only his mother, but his four brothers. He had his mother on his back, the twins on his hips, and Yudhishthira and Arjuna in his arms. Thus burdened and breaking down the

tees with his breast, he reached the Ganges, which they crossed by means of a boat supplied by Vidura, their low-caste uncle. They continued their journey towards the south. Bhīma had a terrible battle with a Rākshasa, called Hidimva, whom he slew. This evil demon who drank human blood had a beautiful sister, who fell in love with Bhīma. At the request of his brothers Bhīma lived with her till she bore a son. The child was called Ghatotkacha, because his head was like a water pot.

Bhima slays Vaka. The Pāndus resolved to assume the guise of ascetics. On the advice of their grandfather, Vyāsa, who came to see them, they went to a town called Ekachakrā, where they daily begged their bread from house to house. They took up their quarters with a Brāhmin. One day when Bhīma and his mother were alone, they heard great lamentation on the part of their Brāhmin host and his family. Kuntī went to find out the cause. She was told that a Rākshasa named Vaka had promised to protect the town from all its enemies on the condition that a man or woman should be given to him every day for his dinner. It was now the Brāhmin's turn to supply the meal. Father, mother, daughter and son, each unselfishly claimed the right to go and die for the others. The boy, too young to speak distinctly, told his parents not to cry, and taking up a spike of grass, said that with it he would slay the man-eating Rākshasa. It is needless to add that Bhīma killed Vaka, and made his relations promise never to eat human beings again. The Brāhmin's wife in urging that she should go, as a sacrifice to the Rākshasa, declared that a woman's highest religion was to serve her husband, that this duty was greater than sacrifices, asceticism, vows and charities, that to marry more than one wife was not sinful for men, but it was very sinful for a woman to take a second husband after the first, that it was best for a woman to die before her husband, because men solicit widows, even as birds pounce on a piece of meat thrown to the ground.

Birth of Draupadī, and her brother When they were living at Lākṣhārī the Pāṇdus heard of the birth of Draupadī. It will be remembered that Draupadā king of Pāṇchāl had to give up half of his kingdom to Drona. He was determined to have revenge, and he wandered far and near in search of Brāhmins who were experts in the rites of sacrifice. His object was by costly sacrifices to obtain a son who would be able to kill Drona. By the offer of an hundred millions cows he secured two Brāhmins who could perform the sacrifices required. When the sacrifices were in order and ghee had been poured into the fire there came forth a youth with a crown on his head and encased in armour. As soon as he was born he got into a chariot while a voice from heaven declared that he would some day kill Drona. But this son was not born alone. There followed him out of the flames, a most beautiful maiden whose body was so full of fragrance that it could be felt two miles away. Again a heavenly voice spoke and said that this maiden would cause great harm to the Kurus, and be the death of many Kṣatriyas. The son was called Dhristadyumna and Drona, ignorant of the purposes of destiny, took him to his own house and taught him the use of all kinds of weapons. To the maiden was given the name of Draupadī.

The Previous History of Draupadī In a former birth Draupadī was the daughter of a Rishi. Unable to procure a husband, she had sought by means of penance to secure one. Śhiva not only heard her prayer, but said that as she had, in her eagerness, asked for a husband five times, she would, in her next birth, be married to the five Pāṇdus. When she was born to Draupadā Vyāsa appeared to his five grandsons and told them to go at once to Draupadā's country and secure their bride.

The Story of Vishvamitra and Vasishtha On the way they met a Gandharva, whom Arjuna defeated in battle. They became friends, and the Gandharva told them a great many stories. The most remarkable is as follows. There was a Rishi called Vasishtha who

had a wonderful cow, the Kāmadhenu, or cow of plenty, one of the products at the churning of the ocean. This cow yielded to her owner all that he desired, all kinds of food and drink, precious gems and costly robes. It was seen by Vishvāmitra, the great king of Kanyākubja,¹ and he offered the Rishi, 10,000 cows in exchange. When the Rishi refused the king said, 'I am a Kshatriya, it is the duty of my race to take things by force.' The Brāhmin replied, 'Your strength lies in force. The strength of a Brāhmin is in forgiveness.' So the king began to lead the cow away. But when she saw what was going to happen, the cow produced from her tail, udders, womb, dung and urine, great armies of Yavanas, Shakas, Hunas, Barbaras, Sinhalas and many other Mlechchhas. These armies drove the forces of the king to a distance of seventy-seven miles. The king was much disgusted, and said, 'I see that Kshatriya strength is all in vain. I shall seek henceforth the true strength.' He did so, and with such success, that the world was filled with his glory, and he acquired the rank of a Brāhmin. He at last drank Soma with India himself.²

Draupadi's Svayamvara When the Pāndus reached the capital of Draupada's kingdom, they took up their residence in the guise of begging Brāhmins at the house of a potter. They arrived just in time for the Svayamvara of Draupadī. The princess according to the ancient custom was to choose her own husband. A great amphitheatre had been formed on a plain and on every side were erected palaces, seven stories high, with windows full of golden tracery and walls inlaid with precious stones. Kings and Brāhmins flocked to the Svayamvara from all countries. On the sixteenth day, after many displays by dancers and actors, Draupadī was to choose her husband. The man who shot an arrow through a wheel, and struck the eye of a fish, suspended on a tall pole, would be the happy man.

¹ Kanauj on R. Kali-nadi, tributary of Ganges

² There are many stories told of the rivalries between Vishvāmitra and Vasishtha

Prince after prince tried to bend the bow in vain. Then Karna appeared. He was able easily to bend the bow, but Draupadi cried out that she would not marry the son of a charioteer. It was then that Arjuna stepped forward. In a moment he raised the bow, which others could not lift and struck the mark with five arrows in succession. Draupadi cast the garland round his neck while the gods rained down flowers. The princes, however, were indignant at the thought that a Brāhmin beggar should win such a prize and they at once attacked Draupadi's father. The Pāndus however hurried to his help. It was a great fight that took place and it was only stopped by the intervention of Krishna,¹ who declared that the maiden had been justly won.

Marriage of Draupadi When Arjuna and his brothers got back to the potter's house taking Draupadi with them, they called to their mother to come and see what they had got with that day's begging. Without coming out to look she bade them enjoy it equally. When she saw what she had done she was greatly shocked, but Yudhishthira fearing that otherwise there might be disunion between the brothers, said she would be the wife of all of them. When Draupadi discovered that his daughter was to be the bride of the Pāndus and not of a Brāhmin beggar he was very delighted and great preparations were made for the marriage. He was shocked however at the idea of his daughter having five husbands till Vyāsa appeared and told him of one lady who was married to seven Rishis and another who was married to ten brothers, and all of them ascetics. A further argument was that a mother must be obeyed and saved from speaking an untruth.

The Story of the five Indras Vyāsa further told a very strange tale to strengthen his argument. In days of old Yama the king of Death, was so busy killing

¹ This is the first mention of Krishna the incarnation of Vishnu. He is cousin to the Pandus and prince of Dwarka.

² But compare what Vyasa told them. Page 4

animals for a great sacrifice that he hadn't time to kill men. The gods got alarmed at the increase in the human population and went in deputation to the grandsire, the god Brahmā. Brahmā consoled them, and as they were returning to their own homes they met a beautiful lady all in tears. Indra asked the lady why she wept. She told him to come and see. Indra followed her accordingly, and soon saw a handsome youth and a young woman sitting on a throne on the top of a mountain, playing at dice. The youth paid no attention to Indra who got angry, and said, 'Young man, do you know who I am? I am the Lord of the universe.' The youth then looked up and smiled. He was no other than Mahadeva, the great god Shiva. He bade the woman bring Indra to him, saying he would see to it that pride did not again enter his heart. Paralysed with fear, Indra fell to the ground. Shiva then bade him raise a huge stone, which concealed a cave in the mountain side, and enter the cave. When he entered he saw four others, exactly like himself. It would seem that they had in some previous age been similarly punished for pride, and were called the four old Indras. When Indra had acknowledged that Shiva was the onlooker of the universe, it was ordered that the four old Indras, with a portion of the energy of the then existing Indra should go and be born as the five Pāndus,¹ while the beautiful lady, who was none other than the goddess Lakshmi, would be their wife. Not only so, but when Shiva, and the five Indras went to see Vishnu, and get his approval, that god took two hairs from his body, one of them white, another black, and sent them into the wombs of Devākī and Rohinī of the Yadu race. These hairs were born as Balarāma and Krishna.

To remove Draupada's last doubts the king was by the ascetic power of Vyāsa permitted to see the five Pāndus in their original divine form with golden crowns, and shining like the sun, each of them like Indra himself. The marriage ceremony was then performed.

¹ But note the different origin of the Pāndus, as stated at p. 39.

with each of the five brothers in turn. Krishna gave Draupadi thousands of maid servants brought from different countries and millions of golden coins.

The Pandus Found Indraprastha When Dhritarashtra and his hundred sons heard that the Pāndus were alive and married in Draupadi, there were many consultations as to what should be done. Duryodhana and Karna wanted to fight them, but the old king yielded to the arguments of Bhishma, Drona and Vidura and agreed to a division of the kingdom. The Pāndus were accordingly given the district of Khāṇḍavaprastha, a wild unpopulated tract on the banks of the Jumna. Accompanied by Krishna, they began at once to build a splendid city surrounded by a moat as wide as the sea and with walls that reached the sky.¹ Merchants and Brāhmins flocked to it from all quarters. Its streets were wide and well laid out. Its towers were filled with armed men and soldiers crowded its ramparts. The country around was adorned with many lakes full to the brim and flowers and fruits were in the richest profusion. It was appropriately called the city of Indra. The brothers lived happily together in their capital. They defeated all their foes in battle, and discharged all the duties of Government. Their subjects regarded them with the greatest affection, and virtue began to grow over all the world. They had only one cause for anxiety, and that was the fear that they might quarrel about Draupadi.

Narada's Advice That fear was increased by a story which the Rishi Nārada told them, about two brothers Sunda and Upasunda who killed each other. These two were demons, chiefs of the Dāityas devoted to one another in every respect, thinking the same thoughts and doing the same things. Their ambition was to conquer the three worlds. They engaged in the most severe ascetic practices, standing on their toes, living on air, besmeared with dirt, casting portions of their flesh into the sacrificial fires. At last they compelled the grandsire Brahmā to grant them a boon. It

¹The walls were the height of Mt. Mandara, which was 77,000 miles high.

was to have no fear of any created thing in heaven or earth or hell, except one another. Their purpose accomplished, they began to fight with gods and demons and men. The gods had to flee from heaven and take refuge with Brahmā. At last the architect of the gods, Vishvakarmā, was told to create a woman so beautiful that no one could resist her. The architect took a great deal of trouble, and the result was so wonderful, that when she walked round the place where the gods were seated, Shiva and Indra alone were too dignified to turn round and look at her. But all the same, their desire to see her, and to keep on seeing her, was so great that a face broke out on every side of Shiva's head. Indra's case was still more wonderful. A thousand eyes burst forth, before, behind, and on all sides of his head. It was in this way, that Shiva came to have four faces and Indra a thousand eyes. This lovely maiden was sent to tempt the two brothers. Exposing all her charms, she came to a place where the brothers were. They were, at the time, in a forest sporting with women and inflamed with wine. Whenever they saw her they rushed forward and each seized a hand. They each demanded that the other should give place, crying out, 'I saw her first, she is mine, not yours.' From words they came to blows, and in the end killed each other.

Alarmed by this tale the Pāndus asked Nārada what they should do to prevent the possibility of strife, and accordingly they resolved that when Draupadī was with any of the brothers, none of the other brothers should on any account enter the room where they were. The brother who transgressed that rule must retire to the forest and live as a Brahmachārī for twelve years.

Arjuna Leaves Indraprastha. One day when searching for his weapons, to go to the help of a Brāhmin whose cows had been stolen, Arjuna, rather than neglect his duty to a subject, entered the room where Draupadī and Yudhishthira were together. He recovered the cows and then despite his brother's appeals insisted on observing the letter of the rule. During his twelve years exile, Arjuna visited all

parts of India. He visited the great places of pilgrimage and gave many gifts to Brāhmīns. He travelled as far as the sea on both the eastern and southern coasts. Despite his vow of Brāhmachāri he yielded to the embraces of the daughter of the king of the Nāgas making virtue his motive. The lady said she would kill herself if he did not yield. In the kingdom of Manipura also he fell in love with the king's daughter and was married to her. After living with her for three years a son was born and he resumed his wanderings. At last he came to Dwāraka on the western sea to visit Krishna and fell in love with his sister Subhadrā. Arjuna suggested that he would like to be a candidate at her Svayamvara but Krishna reminded him that the lady might choose somebody else, and it would be better to carry her off. Arjuna accepted this advice and one day seizing the maiden, set off in his golden chariot for Indraprastha. The Princes of Dwāraka were seated on a thousand golden thrones, their eyes inflamed with wine¹ when they heard of the abduction. Balarāma Krishna's brother, was very angry and they began to prepare to follow the fugitive. Krishna however told them that the marriage would enhance their glory and that instead of being angry they should follow Arjuna and entreat him to come back. They did so and Arjuna returned with them. The marriage was duly performed, and after spending one year in Dwāraka and another in Pushkara, the years of exile came to an end. He was now free to go back to his brothers and Indraprastha. When Draupadi saw Subhadrā, she was filled with jealousy but the latter appeased Draupadi by saying I am your maid and they became friends.

Soon after Krishna paid another visit to his cousins the Pāndus and brought them many gifts, including hundreds of thousands of draught horses a thousand elephants each as large as a mountain a thousand damsels each with a hundred pieces of gold round her neck a thousand steeds with golden harness also gold and

gems, a very ocean of wealth. These gifts were all for his sister who had married Arjuna. A son was born to Arjuna and Krishna's sister. He was called Abhimanyu. It was Abhimanyu's grandson, Janamejaya, who celebrated the snake sacrifice at which the *Mahābhārata* was recited.

The Burning of the Khandava Forest. During Krishna's visit the Pāndus entertained him at a great picnic on the banks of the Jamna. The women in the party took so much liquor that their gait became unsteady, and they began to sport. Diaupadi and Subhadra in their intoxication gave away many costly robes and ornaments to their female companions. When Krishna and Arjuna were sitting together telling of their exploits, a Brāhmin with matted locks and clothed in rags approached them. The two heroes at once got up, and stood waiting to receive his commands. The Brāhmin said, he wanted food, but not ordinary food. He was indeed Agni the god of fire and the food he wanted was the Khāndava forest. He had tried to consume it more than once, but Indra had always put out the fire with torrents of rain. Agni asked the heroes to help him. He had been drinking so much ghee at a twelve years' sacrifice, that he had got weak and pale. The only way to restore his vigour and brightness was to consume the Khāndava forest. Krishna and Arjuna agreed to help Agni if he got them celestial weapons. This he did. He got a bow from the god Varuna with an inexhaustible quiver full of arrows, and a chariot full of weapons. Krishna also got a mace and discus. A great battle ensued. Indra was defeated. When he poured down torrents of rain, Arjuna extinguished it with his arrows. Great multitudes of animals, uttering fearful yells and in great agony, perished in the flames. Only six creatures escaped, the snake Ashwasena, a son of Takshaka, four birds and the demon Maya, who was the son of a Rishi. But the object was accomplished, and Agni became once more bright and vigorous. He had drunk rivers of fat and marrow.

The Assembly Book

The 'Sabha Parva or Assembly Book' gets its name from the great assembly of princes at Hastinapur. It tells of how Yudhisthira was persuaded to play at dice in the end losing his kingdom and with his brothers going into exile.

Maya Offers to Build a Palace Maya was so grateful to Arjuna for saving his life in the burning of the Khindava forest that he promised to build a palace for the Pāndus. He was the architect of the demons, and had great stores of gold and gems which he kept on the Himalayas guarded by Rāshtras and Yakshas. In fourteen months he built a palace, the like of which had never been seen on earth. It was so brilliant with gems that it seemed to be on fire. Maya brought 8000 hāksas who could travel through the air to be its guards. When Nārada the Rishi came to see it, he was so impressed, that he was led to compare it with the heavenly palaces of Indra, Yama, Varuna, Kuvera and Brahmā. These palaces of the gods were each about 700 miles long, 700 miles broad and 35 miles high. Of some it is said that no one there ever suffered from grief or old age, from hunger or thirst. The Gandharvas and Apsaras (heavenly nymphs) helped to pass the time with dance and song. In one was to be seen Kuvera seated on a throne with his 1000 wives. In another the rivers and seas personified attended on Varuna. Nārada had to spend 1000 years in meditation before he was permitted to see Brahmā's heaven. It cannot be described, it is eternal. There dwell sound and touch, day and night, mind and space, the Sun and Moon and Stars, the four Vedas and all Incantations, the wheel of virtue and the wheel of time, patience and forgiveness and peace of mind.

Narada Proposes the Performance of Rajasuya.

Before he left Nārada advised the Pāndus to perform the great Rājasūya sacrifice. This sacrifice is looked upon as the sign of imperial dominion¹. Before undertaking it, however, they invited Krishna to pay another visit to Indraprastha, and give them his advice. Krishna came accordingly, but his statement shows that the Pāndus had by no means acquired an imperial dominion. He gives an account of the victories of Jarāsandha, king of Magadha, who at that very time held as prisoners close on 100 kings whom he had defeated in battle, and would never recognize the supremacy of the Pāndus. Krishna himself had had to abandon his city of Mathurā, and take refuge in Dwāraka, because of Jarāsandha.

Defeat and Death of Jarasandha. An attack on Jarāsandha was justifiable, as he intended to offer the hundred kings he held as prisoners, in a great human sacrifice to the god Shiva, by whose help he had been so victorious. Krishna, Arjuna and Bhīma, in the guise of Brāhmins, set out for Magadha. It was an enterprise of great danger, for Jarāsandha had two friends, and the three together were more than a match for heaven, earth, and hell. Jarāsandha had once thrown a club a distance of 700 miles. On their getting near Magadha, by way of practice, the three heroes broke down a mountain. Having reached the palace, they were admitted at once, as the king had a great respect for Brāhmins. But the way in which they had broken down the mountain made him doubtful, as the prowess of a Brāhmin rests in speech and not in deeds. Krishna and his companions however had gained their end. They had got into the king's presence, and challenged him to single combat. This, as a Kshatriya, he could not refuse, and he offered to fight Bhīma. The fight lasted for thirteen days, without intermission, when Jarāsandha began to show signs of exhaustion. In the end Bhīma broke Jarāsandha over his knee, and the intermingled roar of the

¹ See pages 42 and 55 compare also pages 33, 35 and 38

victor and his victim smote the heart of every creature with terror. The hundred kings were released and were all bidden attend the approaching sacrifice. Among the spoil, Krishna got a celestial car with heavenly horses as swift as the wind which had formerly belonged to the god Indra.

The Pandus Conquer the World On their return to Indraprastha preparations were made to conquer the four quarters of the world. Yudhishthira remained at home. Krishna returned to Dwāraka. The list of countries given is exceedingly interesting. They fought with Śakās, Śhalās, Mālās with monkeys and men called Keralās who had only one leg. The Mlechchhās, who lived on the sea coast in the West paid tribute in cloth and pearls, blankets, silver, coral and gold, a very shower of wealth counted by hundreds of millions.

Celebration of the Rajasuya Sacrifice Now that the whole earth was under his sway, Yudhishthira was worthy to perform the sacrifice. Kings and Rishis came in great numbers. Krishna came once more attended by a military army and bringing great stores of wealth. The writer declares that Krishna is the origin of all things, the receptacle in which every thing is destroyed; nevertheless, at his own desire, he is appointed to wash the feet of the Brāhmins who are present at the sacrifice. This he does in order to obtain merit. These Brāhmins were highly honoured in other ways. Though they attended in thousands each of them was presented with thousands of cows, with golden coins and damsels. Special houses were erected for them and they spent their time in talk and watching dancers and actors. They filled the air with the words—Give! Give! On the last day of the sacrifice, the Rishi Nārada told Yudhishthira that it was his duty to offer 'arghyas' to the most distinguished of the kings and others present. This led however to unexpected strife because the Pāndus looked upon Krishna as their most distinguished guest. Among the kings present was an old enemy of Krishna, Shishupāla, king of

Chedi, and he wanted to know why the son of a cow-herd should receive so great an honour. He boasted of holding up the mountain Gobardhan but it was really no bigger than an ant hill. He had killed Kansa, whose food he had eaten. Had he not practiced deceit, he would never have got the better of Jarāsandha. These harsh words drew from the aged Bhīshma the grand-uncle of the Pāndus, the declaration that Krishna is the origin of the universe, and the upholder of all things. In the end Shishupāla challenged Krishna to single combat. Before accepting, Krishna told the assembly some of Shishupāla's evil deeds, and then cut off his head with his discus. Bhīshma also said that the dead king had been born with three eyes, and four hands, and that at birth, he had brayed like an ass. Krishna, it would appear, had been appointed by fate to kill Shishupāla, but he had promised his mother that he would forgive him one hundred offences, before he did so.

When the sacrifice was completed, the kings and Rishis departed. Vyāsa before setting out for Kailās, the heaven of Shiva, told his grandsons of the thirteen years of sorrow that lay before them.

The Gambling Match. Among the last to leave was Duryodhana, the eldest of the Kurus. His greed and jealousy were roused by seeing the wealth and popularity of his cousins. He told his uncle Shakuni, who was with him, that he could endure the sight no longer, that he was going to take poison or throw himself into a well. His uncle tried to comfort him, but in vain. It was no use trying to overcome them in battle. At last Shakuni thought of a plan. Yudhishthira was very fond of gambling, but was a very poor player. Shakuni boasted that nobody could equal himself at dice, not in the three worlds, let Duryodhana challenge his cousin to play and for big stakes. He would be too proud to refuse. His duty as a Kshatriya would prevent him from refusing a challenge. Then when he agreed, Duryodhana could say that he had selected his uncle Shakuni to throw the dice for

him. In this way, declared the uncle, we shall deprive the Pāndus of all that they possess. The two plotters when they got back to Hastināpurā, at once approached the old king, but he was very unwilling to yield. But Duryodhan's picture of the Pāndu wealth—twenty six copper vessels full of amrita better than what the gods themselves drank, brought to the sacrifice by Ocān himself, 10 000 Brāhmins eating daily off plates of gold, 88 000 Brāhmins each presented with thirty beautiful maidens, 300 horses with noses like parrots, asses that could run 2 000 miles in a day, 100 000 billion soldiers, and 100 million cars, riches more abundant than what belonged to Indra himself, the king of the gods, this wonderful description and the thought that it might become the property of his own beloved sons roused the father's heart at last and despite the protests of Vidura, his half-brother, he consented to a challenge being sent.

It is interesting to note that the father tells his son that contentment is the secret of happiness while the son replies that discontent is the root of all prosperity. It is realised also that Shakuni intends to cheat Yudhis-thira, but Duryodhan says that Indra after giving a pledge not to fight, cut off the head of an enemy and adds that this is the eternal usage. When Yudhis-thira received the summons he realised the foolishness of the whole proceedings, he was persuaded that Shakuni would not only defeat him, but cheat him. Like his uncles, however, he declared that man is not free and moves under the influence of fate. His pride moreover forbade that he should decline a challenge. When he reached Hastināpurā, and before the game began, Yudhis-thira put in a plea for honest play, but Shakuni already appointed as his nephew's deputy frankly replied that men seldom played from honest motives and taunted the prince with being afraid. The prince, too proud to protest against Shakuni being the player, too proud to say more than that dishonest play is against the rule, demands that Shakuni should begin. Each time it is Yudhis-thira that proposes the stakes,

and each time Shakuni, by unfair play, wins Ten stakes are thus lost one after the other, a chain of pearls got at the churning of the ocean, jars full of golden coins, a royal car, 100,000 beautiful maidens, adorned with bracelets of gold, thousands of serving men, a thousand elephants, and so on At this stage Vidura again tried to stop the match He told his brother that Duryodhana would be the curse of his race, that he should have been exposed at his birth, that even now he must sacrifice his son for the sake of the world It was to no purpose however, and the interruption seems to have made Yudhishthira more reckless than before For the eleventh stake he offered all his wealth, for the twelfth all his houses and land, all his cows and sheep and horses, then he staked his four brothers, and himself, nineteen stakes in all No longer his own master, but the slave of Duryodhana, he was invited to propose his wife Draupadī, as the twentieth stake In his madness he staked Draupadī also, and lost her as he had lost himself, his brothers and all that he possessed

Cruel treatment of Draupadī. Whenever Draupadī was in his power, Duryodhana had her sent for, and gave orders that she should sweep the rooms of the palace, and live among the serving women Draupadī was unwilling to believe that she should be compelled to appear among so many men Only once had she been seen, at her own Svayamvara, by the kings gathered at that time The wind and the sun did not see her Why then should she be seen by men It was her season also, and in accordance therewith her only garment was a single cloth A charioteer who was sent to bring her, was unequal to the task, and a younger son of Dhritarāshtra went off and brought her in, dragging her by the hair To her pathetic appeals he answered that he did not care what her condition was Whether she had only one cloth to cover her, or whether she was naked, she must come and be their slave She appealed to her husbands, but they were helpless. She appealed to Bhishma, and he said that

what had happened was due to Yudhishthira's own act. Vidura however interposed, saying that Yudhishthira had no right to stake his wife, as at the time he did so, he had already staked himself, and lost himself, and was no longer free. This appeal was not listened to, though one of Dhritrāshtra's sons Vikarna, pleads for honest treatment, and says frankly that the stakes were won dishonestly.

Karna the bitter enemy of the Pāndus then proposed that the Pāndus and their wife should be bidden to lay aside their robes. The Pāndus obeyed by taking off their upper garments, and Duhshāsana attempted to pull off Draupadi's single cloth. When he saw this, Bhīma swore that he would drink Duhshāsana's blood on the field of battle. But higher help was at hand. In her extremity Draupadi called upon Krishna and though unseen Vishnu and Hari and Nara and Dharma came to her aid, and covered her nakedness with hundreds of cloths of many colours. The hearts of the kings present were manifestly roused and Vidura made another attempt to interfere. He demanded an answer to his question—Was Yudhishthira entitled to stake his wife when he was no longer his own master? If the assembled princes did not answer they would all go to hell. To know the answer and not to give it from anger or fear or temptation, was a very great sin. It destroyed all the good deeds of a man's ancestors and descendants for seven generations both up and down. The princes would not speak. A climax however was at hand. Duryodhana was guilty of an indescribable insult to Draupadi and immediately after in the very chamber of the king a jackal howled, while asses brayed and fearful birds filled the air with their cries.

The mother of the Kurus knew what these sounds meant. She had heard them at the birth of her eldest son and filled with fear she hurried to the king. The old man saw at last the danger that was at hand, and denouncing his eldest son, for the insult he had given to Draupadi, he told that lady to ask for a boon. She

asked first of all that Yudhishthira should be set free. When she was bidden ask a second boon, she demanded the freedom of the other brothers. When she was offered a third boon she replied that a Brāhmin could ask a hundred boons, but a Kshatriya woman could only ask for two. In any case, having regained their freedom, her husbands could obtain all they wanted by their own efforts. The old king then restored all their wealth to his nephews and assured them that he had only allowed the gambling to take place, that he might test the strength and weakness of his children.

The Second Gambling Match. Duryodhana and his brothers were very angry at their father, giving back all their wealth and dignity to the Pāndus, and along with Karna and Shakuni they began to work on the old man's fears. They told him that the Pāndus were getting ready for war, and that he was deceiving himself if he thought that, despite his kind treatment of them, they would ever forget the insult that Draupadī had received. They therefore proposed another gambling match, and with it a stake that would free them, for years to come, of the Pāndus, and give themselves time by means of alliances to gather together an invincible army. The terms of this second match were that the losing party should spend twelve years in the forest, and for a thirteenth year live in disguise in some inhabited country. Should they be discovered during this thirteenth year, they would have to undergo another exile of twelve years. Gāndhārī pleads with her husband not to sanction another gambling match. She tells him that prosperity gained by means of evil deeds is soon destroyed. What is honestly gained endures for generations. The king answers that if the destruction of his race has come, he cannot prevent it, and one should not seek to hinder it. When Yudhishthira is informed of the new proposal and of the stakes, he too declares that all creatures obtain good and evil according to the appointment of Him who ordains all things. Whether he plays or not, what will be, will be, and so guided by Fate, he comes

back with his brothers once more to Hastināpura and though fully aware of the consequences, sits down to play. The result was the same as before. Shaluni once more was allowed to throw the dice, and once more Shakuni won.

The Departure of the Pandus The Pāndus at once prepared to go to the forest. They laid aside their royal robes, and dressed themselves in deer skins. Their mother Kuntī they left behind in the care of their uncle Vidura. But she declared that she no longer wished to live, that Mādrī had chosen the better part, when she elected to die on the funeral pyre of their husband Pāndu. Surely Krishna could not be God, when he allowed his dearly loved friends to suffer such injustice. Yudhishthira bade a solemn and courteous farewell to Bhishma, Drona and Kṛpā, to the blind old king, and even to his hundred sons. All he said was that he would see them again when the years of exile were over. The other Pāndus however vowed vengeance, declaring what they would do when they returned. Their exultant cousins only mocked at them the more. As the five brothers set out from the city terrible omens were heard and seen. Lightning flashed from a cloudless sky. The sun was eclipsed and meteors fell. Jackals howled in the temples of the gods and vultures shrieked from amidst sacred trees. Nārada too and other Rishis came and declared that when thirteen years were spent the sin of Duryodhana would be repaid in the total destruction of the Kuru race. Having uttered this solemn prophecy they disappeared passing through the sky.

III

The Forest Book

It describes the life of the Pāndus during their twelve years of forest life. It is the second largest in the poem, and is specially interesting because of the many myths and legends it contains.

Forest Life. When the Pāndus had gone to the forest, their grandfather Vyāsa, and another Rishi Maitreya both came to Hastināpura and tried to have the banishment annulled. Their efforts however were not successful. They only succeeded so far that they prevented a scheme of Duryodhana's for killing the Pāndus in their helplessness. A great many citizens followed the exiles, and were with difficulty persuaded to return. Many Brāhmins also decided to share their exile, much to the grief of Yudhisthira, who could not bear the thought of such holy men enduring hardship. When he sought the advice of Dhaumya, his family priest, as to how he should support so many Brāhmins, he was told to pray to the Sun, and to repeat his 108 names. This he did, practising the Yoga rites, which as well as the principles of the Sāṅkhya philosophy were explained to him. As a result of these austerities the Sun appeared to Yudhisthira, and gave him a copper vessel. From this vessel were produced, during their twelve years of forest life, all the food that the exiles required, fruit, roots, flesh and vegetables. It was Yudhisthira's rule to feed the Brāhmins first, and then his brothers. Draupadī ate after all the others had finished. When she was satisfied, the vessel, for the time being, became exhausted, to be miraculously filled when food was next required.

A visit from Krishna. Soon after their exile began, the Pāndus received a visit from Krishna. When he came, Arjuna began to sing his praises. He

calls him the creator and sustainer of the universe. He says that he was the first to perform the Horse Sacrifice that, in days of old he had lived as an ascetic on the banks of Pushkara lake for 11 000 years had stood for 1000 years on one leg at another place had lived for 100 years on air only standing on one leg all the time while he had gratified the gods by a sacrifice that continued for twelve years. On three thousand different occasions he had become incarnate that he might destroy the demons who afflicted the world. The great god Brahmā had sprung from his navel. The other member of the Hindu Trinity, Shiva, had sprung from his head. In reply to these words of praise Krishna expressed his great regret that he had not been able to come to Hastinapura. Had he been there the gambling match would never have taken place. The four greatest evils that afflict the race are women gambling, hunting and drinking and the greatest of all is gambling. When asked where he had been he said he was absent from Dwāraka, on an expedition against king Shalya who had also threatened his own city of Dwāraka. That city had been in so great danger that to prevent carelessness, all liquor drinking had been forbidden and actors and dancers driven outside the walls. It is worth recording that Shalya, who was a brother of Shishupala had an air chariot, which was able apparently to move on the sea also. It was a battle however not of men but of gods. Krishna's foes are described as Asuras (Demons). Shalya and Krishna could each discharge thousands of weapons and of all kinds. They even used mountain pearls to throw at one another. A hundred suns and moons with thousands of stars, blazed forth so that no one could tell whether it was day or night. In the end Krishna, by discharging his discus into the sky cut Shalya's air machine in two and brought it crashing to the ground. Apparently another stroke with his discus was required to put an end to king Shalya himself. Having given these explanations for his inability to help them at the proper time, Krishna returned to Dwāraka.

The discontent of Draupadī. At the beginning of their stay in the forest, the Pāndus accompanied by innumerable Brāhmins visited a holy lake and other places frequented by Rishis, Munis and many other kinds of ascetics. Mārkandeya in particular welcomed them, and compared their fate to that of Rāma, the son of Dasharatha. We are told that the air was filled with the sound of Brāhmins reciting the Yajur, the Rig and the Sāma Vedas. Despite these privileges, Draupadī was discontented. She bitterly contrasted the simple life of the forest with the days when they sat on seats of ivory and fed thousands of Brāhmins from plates of gold. She reproaches her husbands for acting far too meekly. While admitting that a refusal to forgive in all circumstances is bad, she quotes Prahlāda to show that continual forgiveness is also evil. Yudhishthira, however, in reply discourses on the injurious effects of anger, declaring that by forgiveness the world is sustained, and that without it, men cannot attain to the heaven of Brahmā. He quotes in his support the words of the Rishi Kashyapa, 'This world belongs to the forgiving, the other world belongs to the forgiving. They obtain honours here, and holy blessedness in the next.' Draupadī, however, refuses to be persuaded. She declares that virtue does not always pay, and then she adds a home thrust. If you were always so virtuous as that, why did you gamble? To Draupadī, God plays with men, as a child plays with his toys. She is beside herself when she sees the wicked in prosperity, and the righteous forsaken. Bhīma then speaks in support of Draupadī. He says they have been robbed of their kingdom unjustly, and sees no good reason for keeping their promise in such circumstances. Too great forgiveness is weakness. Over righteousness simply destroys. The wise man seeks both pleasure and virtue, and the one depends on the other. The Shāstras, he says, bid men seek virtue in the morning, profit at noon, pleasure in the evening. They are Kshatriyas, not Brāhmins. In any case, one can always wipe away his sins by means of gifts. When Yudhishthira replies that

all the things in the world are not equal to truth, Bhīma tells him that he should have been born a Brāhmin, and that Manu himself had declared that Kshatriyas were generally crooked in mind because the duties of kings were opposed to peace and virtue. Yudhishthira in the end silences his brother by asking how five mendicant exiles without men and money can hope to fight with success against the Kurus, with all the power and wealth they now have in their hands¹.

Arjuna goes in search of celestial weapons At this point Vyāsa their grandfather appears and says that they must prepare for the future. He advises that Arjuna be sent to the gods to procure from them celestial weapons. Arjuna accordingly set off for the Himalayas. On the way he met the god Indra who told him to go and see Shiva as he was the greatest of all the gods. To procure a vision of Shiva it was necessary that he should engage in asceticism which he did in the usual way living on air standing on his toes, with hands upraised. The earth became so heated with this severe asceticism that it began to smoke. The Rishis got alarmed, and going to Shiva invited him to interfere. Shiva told them not to be alarmed, as he knew what Arjuna wanted, and would grant his request. Shiva then descended to earth in the guise of a hunter, attended by his wife and thousands of male and female goblins. When he got to the place where Arjuna was the god provoked Arjuna to fight. An amazing battle between the two then took place in which thousands of arrows, swords, trees, stones, fists and even wrestling were employed. In the end Arjuna was overcome, and fell senseless to the ground. On his return to consciousness, he set about making a clay image of the god Shiva, and worshipped it with garlands. All at once to his joy and amazement he saw the garlands suspended round the neck of the hunter, and realised that he had been fighting not with a man but with Shiva himself. Arjuna threw himself at the gods feet, and was told that he would receive the

Note 9 The discussion between Draupadi and Yudhishthira

famous weapon Pashupata, and he instructed in its use. Such instruction was highly necessary, as its improper use would destroy the whole universe. As it was, the weapon, when it came, looked like an embodiment of the god Yama, and earth and sea began to tremble. Shiva then returned to heaven, whereupon Indra, Varuna, Kuvera and Yama appeared bringing with them weapons. The gift of Yama was a weapon called Antardhāna, which had the power of sending an enemy to sleep.

Arjuna goes to Indra's heaven. It will be remembered that Arjuna was India's own son, and he was taken by his father to what was called Indra's heaven. There he spent five years, making himself perfect in the use of the different weapons he had received, and studying music and dancing from the Gandharvas themselves. In this heaven there were thousands of lovely nymphs called Apsarases, who by their lascivious dancing captivated the hearts of all beholders. Indra resolved that his son Arjuna should taste all the joys of heaven, and sent a message to the nymph Urvasī, telling her to place herself at Arjuna's disposal. Nothing loath, the nymph made herself as lovely as she could. She even sought to exhilarate herself with liquor. When Arjuna saw her, he closed his eyes from modesty, and when he heard that she had been sent to him by his father, he closed his ears with his hands. He assured her that he looked upon her as the wife of his superior. Though informed that all the past generations of his race sported with her sister nymphs, and incurred no sin, he resisted her advances, and in the end the Apsaras, in a rage cursed him and went away. The curse was that he was to be deprived of his manhood and live among women as a dancer, and eunuch, because he had disobeyed the commands of his own father, and resisted a woman pierced by the darts of love.

It is added by the author, that those who listen to this story of the pure conduct of Arjuna, will become free from pride, wrath, and other sins, and when they

go to heaven, will sport there, presumably with the nymphs. When Indra heard of how Arjuna had been cursed he told him that the curse would only have effect during the last and thirteenth year of the exile, and would prove a blessing in the end.

The Story of Nala and Damayanti The other brothers, all these years in the forest, became very anxious over the long absence of their brother Arjuna. Bhima too was getting more and more restless, as he heard of the growing power of the Kurus and quoted the Vedas to the effect that as a year passes away like a day, they might on the authority of the Vedas consider the thirteen years of exile complete. The books, he said, taught that you must conquer the deceitful by deceit. It was while Bhima was talking after this fashion, one day that the Rishi Vrihadashwa appeared. Seeking comfort Yudhishthira told the Rishi that he thought no one had ever been so unhappy as he was. To this the Rishi replied that he would tell them the story of a king, whose life was even more miserable than theirs. Nala, king of the Nishāda was possessed of every virtue and beauty, deeply versed in the Vedas, and a brave warrior. He had, however, one vice, a love of gambling. Damayanti was the only daughter of Bhima, King of Vidarbha or Berār. She was more beautiful than any of the celestials. These two had so often heard of each other's beauty, that they fell deeply in love. Nala was so overcome by his passion that he became gloomy and sad, spending much of his time alone in the gardens of his palace. One day he caught a swan with golden wings. The swan told the prince, that if he would set it free it would go to Damayanti and speak of him in such a way, that the princess would never think with love of any other person, as long as she lived. The prince set the bird free, and it at once flew to the city of Vidarbha. Finding Damayanti in a solitary place the bird began to praise Nala for his beauty and goodness, telling her that she must be married to him. Having

sent back a message to Nala, the princess became as afflicted with anxiety as he was. She grew pale and thin, refusing to take rest either night or day. When the king heard of his daughter's condition, he realised that she had now reached puberty and decided to arrange for her marriage. He accordingly sent out messengers, inviting the kings of the earth to attend his daughter's Svayamvara. So many princes came that the world was filled with the sound caused by the clatter of their cars, and the neighing of their horses.

The news of the approaching Svayamvara was carried to heaven also, by the Rishi Nārada. The gods were so much excited by the account given of Damayanti's beauty, that Indra, Agni, Varuna, and Yama decided to go and be candidates for the hand of such a lovely maiden. Getting into their celestial cars, the gods set off for the land of Vidarbha. On the way, they met Nala, and asked him if he would render them a service. When Nala agreed, he was told that he must carry a message to Damayanti to say that four of the celestials wished to be present at her Svayamvara, and that she must choose one of them as her husband. To this Nala protested that they should send some one else, as he was going there with the same purpose in view for himself. But he was told that he must keep his promise. Again when he asked how he could get into the presence of a maiden, so jealously guarded,¹ Indra told him that he would see to that. Thus bound by his promise, Nala continued his journey, and when he got to the palace, gained admission (it is not explained in what way) to the presence of Damayanti. His beauty filled Damayanti with still greater desire, and when he told her that he had come in obedience to the commands of the gods, she declared that her heart was his, and that she would wed none of the celestials. Nala anxious to do his duty as a faithful messenger, pointed out the advantages of marrying a god. He reminded her too that, by offending them, she might suffer from their wrath.

1 This illustrates the existence of the Parda system. See also p. 58.

The maiden however replied that, while she paid all honour to the gods, it was Nala and Nala only that she was prepared to marry. If he would not have her, then she would kill herself by poison, or fire. When Nala pleaded that as the gods' messenger he could no longer look to his own interest, Damayanti replied that she would herself choose him, as her husband from among all the candidates, whether they were gods or men, and thus he would be free from all blame.

When the day of the Svayamvara arrived, and the kings and princes had taken their places on the seats appointed for them, Damayanti entered the amphitheatre. But, alas! when she looked for Nala, she saw not one, but five Nalas exactly alike in every respect. The four gods had changed themselves into Nala's likeness. Greatly perplexed, she resolved to appeal to their compassion and briefly told them of how she had learned to love Nala, and had resolved to have him only as her husband. Accordingly she begged the gods to assume their proper forms. The gods listened to her prayer, and as a result she at once recognized them, because they did not perspire like mortals and were able to sit without touching the ground. Damayanti then advanced to Nala, and put round his neck the garland by which she signified her choice. In his joy Nala declared that as long as he lived, he would always be ready to obey his wife's commands.

On their way back to heaven the gods met Kali yuga, accompanied by Dwāpara yuga.¹ When asked where they were going, Kali said he was going to the Svayamvara of Damayanti. Indra smiled and said that he was somewhat late. The Svayamvara was over and a mortal had been chosen, in the very presence of the gods. Kali could not take this insult to the celestials as easily as Indra did, and he resolved upon revenge. His plan was to enter into Nala and dispossess him of his kingdom. But the

¹ Two of the four Yugas or ages of the world.

problem was how to possess Nala, who was free from fault and stain of any kind. After waiting and watching for twelve years, Kali found that, before performing the Sandhyā ceremony, Nala had neglected to wash his feet. This was enough, a flaw had been detected, and the evil spirit entered the prince. Having accomplished thus much, Kali then began to tempt Pushkara, the prince's brother. He filled his mind with haughty thoughts of sovereignty, and told him to challenge his brother to play at dice, saying he would be certain to win, and in the end secure the whole kingdom. When Nala was challenged to play by his brother, he could not refuse, and a game began which lasted for months, in which Nala, day after day, lost some of his wealth. Realising what the end would be, Damayanti sent her two children to her father's house.

At last the crisis came, and having staked all his wealth and his kingdom, and lost, Nala and Damayanti, each wearing nothing but a single cloth to cover their nakedness were driven from the city by the command of Pushkara, who proclaimed that no one must offer them food or clothing or shelter. The unhappy pair spent three nights outside the city. Oppressed with hunger, Nala tried to catch some birds with his cloth. But the birds seized the cloth and carried it up into the sky, crying out, as they did so, that they were the dice that had ruined him, and that they would not be content till they had robbed him of his cloth also. Nala then tried to persuade his wife to leave him and go to her father's house, but she steadfastly refused, declaring that in all kinds of misery there is no medicine equal to a wife. She pleaded that they both should take refuge with her father but for shame he would not go.

Exhausted with hunger and thirst, they came on the fourth night, after many wanderings, to a rude hut. When they both lay down upon the bare ground, Damayanti fell asleep. Nala then resolved that the wisest plan was to abandon his wife, persuaded that

when left alone she would be sure to seek her father's protection. With a sword which he found, he divided her single garment in two and set off. But time after time he came back to look at her, lamenting his foolishness, and torn by the anguish of parting. After he had finally gone Damayanti woke to find that her husband had deserted her. Crying to the beasts and mountains to tell her whither he had gone the distressed woman was met and swallowed by a snake. Fortunately a hunter saw what had happened and delivered her by tearing the snake in two. But the hunter was so captivated by her beauty that he sought to bend her to his desire. Appealing to her own chastity to save her and to destroy the hunter, if she have ever even thought of any man but her husband, her cry was heard and the hunter fell dead to the ground. After other adventures Damayanti at last came to the kingdom of Chedi where the queen mother took pity on her, and made her handmaid to her own daughter promising to care for her and keep her from the presence of men.

When Damayanti's father heard of how his daughter had been driven, with her husband from their kingdom he sent out Brāhmins in every direction to search for them. One of these came to Chedi where Damayanti was and recognized her despite her disguise. Getting near her he told her who he was and why he had come. Her joy was great when she heard that her parents and children were well. After explanations had been made to the queen mother who proved to be Damayanti's aunt, she set off for her father's capital, attended by a strong escort.

The search for Nala Very soon after Nala had abandoned his wife, he saw a great fire in the forest where he was and heard a voice crying for help. When he approached the fire, he saw a huge snake, lying on the ground. The snake told him that because of a curse passed on him by the Rishi Nārada, he was unable to move, and that if Nala did not help him, he would be consumed by the fire. Nala accord

ingly lifted him up, to remove him to a place of safety. Whenever Nala took him up, the snake contracted to the size of a thumb. They had not gone ten steps, when the snake bit his benefactor, and Nalā at once was transformed into an ugly dwarf. The snake, however, explained that he had done what he did, not from enmity, but friendship. When Nārada had cursed him he had told him that the curse would be removed when Nala came to his help. He added that his change of form would enable him to live free from recognition, till he should be re-united with his wife. He also explained that the poison had not entered his own body, but the body of Kali-Yuga, the evil spirit that possessed him, and would continue to plague Kali Yuga, till he was driven out in desperation. By the snake's advice, Nala directed his steps to the kingdom of Ayodhyā, where, assuming the name of Vāhuka, he entered the service of king Rituparna. He served in the double capacity of cook and trainer of horses.

Meanwhile the Brāhmins continued their search for Nala. By Damayanti's order, they cried aloud, in every city, 'Oh, beloved gambler! where have you gone, deserting your beloved wife, as she lay asleep in the forest?' After a long search, one of the Brāhmins returned with the news that he had seen in Ayodhyā a dwarf who, when he heard the proclamation of Damayanti, was not able to conceal his emotion, and began to weep. He had also spoken some words in defence of Nala's conduct. The messenger was sure that the dwarf must be Nala. Whenever she heard this, Damayanti sent messengers to Ayodhyā, announcing that, as her husband appeared to be dead, she had resolved to hold a second Svayamvara¹. When king Rituparna heard of this, he resolved to be present at the Svayamvara, but on enquiry he learned that the ceremony was to take place the very next day. As the capital of Vidarbha was 700 miles away, he called for his trainer of horses, Vāhuka the dwarf, and asked him

¹ Evidently widow re-marriage was not illegal

if he could accomplish that distance in twenty four hours. The dwarf, who of course was Nala, was as anxious to go as the king and to reproach his wife for her unfaithfulness. He accordingly told the king, that he would take him there in time. A wonderful description is given of the journey. On the way Rituparna, filled with admiration for his charioteer's skill, offered to exchange his own skill in gambling for Nala's gift in driving horses. With a view to overcoming his brother Pushkara, and getting back his kingdom, Nala agreed to the exchange. Whenever he did so, Kali Yuga the evil spirit came out of Nala's body vomiting the poison of the snake that had bitten Nala.

Nala discovered When the king of Ayodhyā and Nala reached their destination they were surprised to find that no preparations had been made for the Svayamvara and they both waited with anxiety to see what would happen. Having thus brought her husband within reach as she had hoped, Damayanti sent a female messenger to the charioteer to ask why he had come and who he was. The charioteer evaded her questions, but when the messenger repeated the words 'Oh beloved gambler, where have you gone' he began to weep, and said 'Good women never become angry and hold their lives protected by the armour of good character, even though deserted by their husbands. When Damayanti heard this account from her messenger she was convinced that the dwarf must be her husband. To make absolutely certain, she sent the woman back more than once. She also procured some of the food which the dwarf had cooked for his master, and the taste of it also showed that it must have been prepared by Nala. Finally she sent her two children to him. The dwarf at once took them on his knees and began to weep. Unable to restrain herself longer, and with the consent of her parents, Damayanti had the charioteer brought to the palace. Calling him by his new name of Vāhukā, she asked him if he had ever heard of a man who abandoned his wife as Nala had done. To this the

dwarf replied by asking why Damayanti had appointed a second Svayamvara. She explained that it was only a device to bring Nala to her side, and appealed to the gods to testify to her purity, and the truth of what she said. In response to her appeal the wind god told Nala, that what she said was true. The drums of heaven too began to play, and flowers fell from the sky. Nala then resumed his true form, and after four years of cruel separation, was re-united to his wife.

Nala recovers his kingdom. After staying a short time at Vidarbha, Nala went to his brother Pushkara, and challenged him to play again. The stakes were Damayanti and Pushkara's kingdom. At a single throw, Nala won back all that he had lost. He however treated his brother very generously, giving him a portion of the kingdom, and excused his fault by putting all the blame on Kali-yuga. Nala and Damayanti passed the rest of their days in great happiness and prosperity. It is said that the man who listens to this excellent old story, gets all his desires fulfilled, and obtains wealth, sons and grandsons, health and joy.

The Pāndus were greatly cheered by listening to this story told to them by Vrihadashwa. The Rishi further dispelled Yudhisthira's fear lest some one else should challenge him to gamble, and plunge him into further distress, by imparting to him a complete knowledge of the science of dice.

Tirathas described. Another visitor, who came to see the Pāndus in the forest shortly after, was the Rishi Nārada. He gave them a long account of the different Tirathas, or places of pilgrimage, and the merit to be acquired by paying them a visit. Pushkara (near Ajmer in Rajputānā) was the first place of pilgrimage that Nārada gave a description of, saying that it was famous throughout the three worlds, frequented even by the great gods. The virtues and merits of one hundred thousand million Tirathas are to be found in Pushkara alone. Even by thinking of Pushkara an intelligent man can get rid of all his sins. To feed one

Brāhmin on the way there, is to gain happiness here and hereafter. To bathe there is the same as performing ten horse sacrifices. It delivers you from the bondage of rebirth and the benefits to be acquired are specially great at full moon in the month Kārttik. Other Tīrathas are described at great length. Of not a few it is said that they also are the greatest. One confers beauty, another the power of disappearing at will, a third makes you equal to the gods. At Rāmahadras, where Parashurāma filled five lakes with the blood of the Kshatriyas, you can acquire gold in abundance. At Saraswatī even though you have killed a Brāhmin, you can be cleansed of your sin. A visit to Pāvaka will secure a hundred heavenly damsels in the other world and procure admission to the highest heaven. Of the Tīratha at Kurukshetra it is said that even the dust of that holy place carried by the wind conveys a man to the loftiest state. A sacred well called Tamraruna is equal to the benefits to be got from a man sacrifice. There are others, which enable you to remember what happened in previous births. The Ganges is the gate of heaven itself while bathing in the Godāverī yields the same benefits as the sacrifice of a cow. Of Prayāg the place where the Ganges and the Jumna unite it is said that we must not let the Vedas nor the opinions of men keep us from going and dying there. There is no Tīratha greater than the Ganges, no god greater than Krishna, and no one superior to a Brāhmin. The grandsire Brahmā has himself declared it. Nārada also stated that the four ages had had different Tīrathas. In the Satya Yuga all Tīrathas were sacred in the Dwāpara Kurukshetra was sacred while in the Kali Yuga the Ganges alone has power. Listening to the story of the different Tīrathas will yield even a Shudra all that he desires while a Brāhmin will be transported over the ocean of this world.

Though little is said as to the motives that should influence men in going to these places of pilgrimage it is said both at the beginning and the close of the

long description, that it is only those who have their souls under control and who are pure in heart, who can bathe at these tīrathas

Visits to Tīrathas. On the advice of Nārada, the Pāndus decided to visit the different tīrathas, and under the guidance of another Rishi they spent a long time, travelling from one sacred place to another and acquiring great stores of merit. Before setting out, Yudhishthira said he would not take with him any Brāhmin who lived on sweetmeats or wanted cooked food or flesh. A great many Brāhmins were greatly aggrieved at this injunction, and returned to Hastinā-pura. Only a few Brāhmins had the courage to accompany Yudhishthira on his travels. At the various places they visited, the Pāndus met many remarkable Rishis and ascetics, and heard many wonderful stories, of which we shall recount a few.

The Rishi Agastya. One of the first hermitages they came to was that of the Rishi Agastya¹. He is said to have taken birth from a water-pot, while he had two fathers the gods Varuna and Mitra. Despite this parentage, it is stated that he one day saw his ancestors, hanging heads downward over a pit, and learned that they were in this dreadful condition, because he had never become the father of a son². To meet their wishes, Agastya created a wife out of the most beautiful and graceful parts of different animals.

His encounter with a Daitya, called Ilwala, to whom he applied for wealth, to give to his bride, shows also the power of the Rishis. Offended with the Brāhmins for not securing him a son from Indra, Ilwala invited a number of them to a feast. Among other foods set before the Brāhmins was what seemed to be goat's flesh, but it was really the flesh of Ilwala's brother, whom the wicked Daitya had killed, and thus put before the Brāhmins in the form of a goat. After the Brāhmins had dined, the Daitya called for his brother. Obedient to his brother's call, Vātāpi came

¹ See Note 5, Vasishtha and Agastya, and note page 31.

² See Story of Jaratkāru, p. 29.

out of the stomachs of the Brāhmīns, rending their bodies asunder as he came. When Agastya went to see Ilwala, about the dowry, the Daitya sought to play the same trick on him, and Vātāpi, in the form of a goat, was duly set before the Rishi, and eaten. When the dinner was over, Ilwala summoned his brother to come out. To his horror however Agastya laughed and said, 'You are too late! I have digested him.'

Agastya drinks up the ocean Agastya's powers of digestion were put to good use on another occasion. It was during the Kṛita Age when the gods and demons were always at war. At this particular time the gods had been put to flight. On the advice of Brahmā however, to whom they had gone in deputation, as they so often did, they had got the Rishi Dadhicha to give them his bones from which they made a weapon, called Vajra. With this weapon, Indra slew Vritra, the chief of the demons, and drove his followers into the depths of the Ocean. From the Ocean as their hiding place, they continued to plague men. In particular they resolved to destroy all knowledge and virtue from the earth by killing and devouring the Munis and other holy men who lived in the forests. Every morning fresh signs of their cruelty were to be seen. The earth was covered with the bones of the holy men whose flesh had been eaten, with broken jars and other implements of worship, while the sacred fires and the libations of ghee were scattered and poured forth with dishonour on the ground. When the gods saw religion thus dishonoured and destroyed, on the advice of Vishnu, they went to Agastya, as their only help and refuge. Singing his glory and declaring that he alone could grant them the boon they required, they asked him to drink up the Ocean in which the demons had taken refuge. Agastya did as he was requested with the result that the gods were able to attack the demons and slay them. The gods having accomplished their purpose asked Agastya to disgorge the water which he had drunk and refill the Ocean, which he had drained dry, but he

replied, 'I have digested the waters of the Ocean. You will need to think of some other way of filling it'. It was eventually refilled by the ascetic efforts of Bhagīratha, who brought the Ganges down from heaven, her previous dwelling place. The god Shiva also assisted, by allowing the Ganges to fall upon his head, in her descent to the earth.

How the Ganges came down from Heaven.

There was a king called Sagara. His wife gave birth to a gourd from which 60,000 sons eventually came forth. These sons were fierce wild men given to evil deeds, and able to climb the sky. They disturbed both gods and men so much that the gods had to seek the protection of Brahmā. He assured them however that the wicked sons of Sagara would soon perish. Not long after Sagara made preparations for the horse-sacrifice.

According to the usual practice, the horse chosen for the sacrifice was set free to roam over the world. It was guarded and watched with great care by the sons of Sagara. Despite all their precautions however, when it came to the bed of the waterless ocean, it disappeared. They returned and reported the loss to their father. He ordered them from his presence, saying that they must never come back unless they brought the horse with them. Accordingly getting spades and pickaxes, they began to dig in the bed of the ocean. They went on digging for a long time, killing in the process hundreds of thousands of demons and serpents and Rākshasas. At last they dug right through to hell, where they at once saw the horse roaming about. In their excitement, they did not notice near by, the famous Rishi Kapila¹. Eager to reach the horse, they pushed past the Rishi, and failed to show him any mark of respect. The Rishi's anger flashed up and he looked at them so angrily that the whole 60,000 sons of Sagara were consumed to ashes on the spot. A grandson of Sagara was able to propitiate the offended Rishi so far that he allowed him to take away the sacrificial horse. The Rishi further promised that the

¹ Kapila was the founder of the Sāṅkhya philosophy.

60 000 sons of Sagarā would get to heaven, when they were sprinkled with the waters of the Ganges. When this became known to Bhagiratha, who was a great great grandson of Sagarā, he at once gave himself up to the most severe austerities which he practised for a 1000 celestial years'. At the end of that time the Ganges appeared before him and asked him what he wanted. In response to his prayer the Ganges agreed to descend to earth but she reminded Bhagiratha that the earth would not be able to withstand her force as she fell from the sky to the earth. She suggested that he should propitiate Shiva also by severe penance and get him to promise his assistance. This also Bhagiratha was willing to do so that his ancestors might get to heaven. Shiva was duly gratified and undertook to break the fall of the Ganges by receiving it first upon his head. In this way Sagarā's 60 000 sons got to heaven, and the empty bed of the Ocean was refilled.

The Story of Rishyasringa They next came to the hermitage of the great sage Rishyasringa. He was the son of the still greater Rishi Kashyapa. Rishyasringa was born from a deer even as Sringa, the son of another Rishi, was born from a cow. Because of his birth from a deer, he had a horn growing on his head. At that time there was a king of Anga, called Lomapāda, a friend of Dasharatha the father of Rāma. It is said that on one occasion Lomapāda told a lie to a Brāhmin, and in consequence he was abandoned by all the Brāhmins. Through having no priest, the king gave way to evil practices the god Indra ceased to send rain and the people of Anga were in great distress. When he consulted his ministers, they told him that if he could manage to bring Rishyasringa the son of Kashyapa, within the borders of his kingdom, his presence alone would make the god Indra relent. The problem was how to persuade the Rishi to leave his hermitage. He lived entirely alone had never seen all his life any human being except his father. It was decided that the courtesans of the town should be sent

for, because they are clever in every thing. One of these, an old woman, undertook to beguile the sinless Rishyasringa by means of her own daughter. Dressing her up as an ascetic she sent her to the hermitage. When the disguised courtesan reached the hermitage, she was well received. But when her host offered to give her water to wash her feet, she said that the practice of her order was to greet other sages and ascetics by an embrace. This was the beginning of his downfall, and when the woman left him, he was filled with great distress. Some days after, she came back, and it was easy for her to persuade him to go away with her to her hermitage as she put it. Having thus persuaded him to go with her, she carried him to the capital of the king. Almost immediately, as his ministers had promised, rain began to pour down from heaven, and the world was flooded with water. It is not said what happened to the temptress, but the king was so delighted that he gave his daughter Santa in marriage to Rishyasringa. Sometime after, the rishi returned to his hermitage accompanied by his royal wife, who was as devoted to him as Damayanti was to Nala, or as Sachī was to Indra.

The Story of Parashu Rama On their way to the Mohendra mountain, the Pāndus heard the sound of Rishis chanting the Vedas. Their guide Lomasha explained to them, that the place where the Rishis were, was two million miles distant. At the mountain they passed the night, and heard from the ascetics there, the story of Parashu Rāma, or Rāma of the axe, one of the incarnations of the god Vishnu. There was a king of the Haihayas, called Ajuna-Kārtā-Vīrya, who had a 1000 arms. He was possessed of a golden car, and he was lord of all the earth, and of all creatures. Able to go everywhere in his car, he persecuted gods and demons and Rishis. He even insulted Indra, the lord of the celestials. As the result of a conference, it was resolved that Vishnu should take birth among men, and he was eventually born as a son of the ascetic Jamadagni, of the family of the demi-god Bhrigu. Both his grand-

mother and mother were the daughters of Iṅga. Rāma of the axe was thus of mixed Brāhmin and Kshatriya descent. One day when Jamadagni was alone in his hermitage the wicked king Arjuna Kārti Vīrya, carried off the cow whose milk supplied the ghee that the ascetic used for worship. When Rāma heard of it, he followed the king and slew him. The king's followers came soon after, and killed the old ascetic. Rāma had again been absent collecting fuel for their religious ceremonies. When he saw his father lying dead he took an oath that he would kill every member of the Kshatriya race. Not less than twenty one times did he kill all the Kshatriyas to be found on the earth while he filled five lakes with their blood. In this way did Viṣṇu fulfil his promise to kill the oppressor the king of the Haihayas and destroyed in addition the whole of the warrior caste.

A visit from Krishna The Pāndus next visited the Ganges where it joins the sea. They then travelled south through Kalinga to the Godaverī. Passing through the Tāmīl country they travelled as far as Pravasha, on the west coast. There the Pāndus along with Draupadī engaged in severe asceticism, living on air and water, and sitting between the five fires. Hearing of their arrival Krishna and his brother Balā Rāma paid them a visit. Bala Rāma discoursed for some time on the problem of suffering. His experience was that the practice of virtue did not lead to any good and that sinful practices caused no evil. The wicked Duryodhanā flourished and the great souled Yudhisṭhira robbed of his kingdom lived in misery.

The Pandus go to the Himalayas In their anxiety about Arjuna the Pāndus decided to go to the Himalayas, in the hope that they might meet him there. As Draupadī was exhausted Bhīma undertook to carry both her and the twins. Later on he summoned to his help his son Ghatotācha, born to him by the Rākshasī Hidimbā. He came accompanied by other Rākshasas, who carried the whole party rapidly through the air. Lomasha the rishi, who escorted

them, did not require such assistance, but travelled along in virtue of his own ascetic powers. In their flight they passed over the countries of the Mlecchhas, and saw too where the Kinnaras dwelt, men with the heads of horses. At last they came to the hermitage of Nara and Nārāyana, a land free from darkness, though untouched by the sun's rays, free from hunger and thirst, from heat and cold, devoid of sorrow and pain. At this holy place lived many great Rishis, men whose minds were intent on emancipation, identifying themselves with the Supreme, and reciting the Vedas.

The Boar Incarnation. It was under the name of Nara-Nārāyana, that Vishnu was appealed to, when he consented to take the form of the Boar Avatāra. The need for this incarnation arose in the following way. For some reason or other Brahmā had to perform the duties of Yama, the god of death. But it would seem that he did not really act his part, as no death took place among men or beasts, while births took place as usual. As a result of such a great increase in the population the earth sank down to a distance of 7000 miles. When the earth appealed to Vishnu for help, he assumed the form of a boar, and raised up the earth again to its place, with a single tusk.

Bhīma meets Hanuman.¹ One day when Bhīma went to gather lotuses for Draupadī, he found a monkey lying on the path in front of him. When the monkey would not get up, Bhīma tried to lift it by the tail, but though he used both hands, he could not move it. This was very wonderful, as on the way Bhīma had amused himself by killing lions and tigers and elephants, using dead elephants as a weapon to knock down and kill others. When Bhīma realized that this was no ordinary monkey, he asked it to declare who it was. The monkey told him that he was Hanumān, and also gave him an account of his adventures with Rāma. At Bhīma's repeated request, Hanumān showed himself in his real gigantic shape, and discoursed for some

¹ Hanuman was the famous monkey chief, the friend of Rama. He was the son of Vāyu the Wind-god.

time, on the duties of the different castes. He also said that in the first age¹ or Krita Yuga, there was no need of performing any religious act: there was no malice or pride, or any kind of sin, there were no gods or demons. Brahma was attainable by all, all men were equal and the four Vedas did not exist. In the Tretā age sacrifices were introduced: men clung close to virtue, and were devoted to asceticism. In the Dwāpara age the Vedas were divided into four parts, and virtue decreased by one half. With the division of the sacred books men became divided in opinions and in the observance of different religious rites. They became less devoted to truth and more subject to passion. Falling away from truth they became subject to disease and many other calamities. Selfishness alone prompted many to perform sacrifices and thus secure heaven. And lastly the Kali Yuga came with only a quarter of virtue remaining. In this age all kinds of evil prevail: famine and disease, sloth and anger. Even religious acts have a contrary effect. Hanumān also explained the duties of the four castes, and added that the Brāhmin secures heaven by asceticism, the Vaishya by gifts and hospitality and the Kshatriya by protecting men. As to the Shudra he was silent. Bhīma and Hanumān were both sons of the god Vāyu, and when they parted they embraced one another over and over again.

The lake to which Bhīma was going to get lotuses for Draupadī was within the kingdom of Kuvera, the god of wealth, and both at that time and on a later occasion, Bhīma slew large numbers of Rākshasas and Yakshas the attendants of the god. When Kuvera heard of the deaths of so many of his followers he was very angry and came to punish Bhīma. He was however quickly appeased, admitting that the lord of the Rākshasas, Manimat, in particular deserved his fate having been cursed by the Rishi Agastya for once spitting on his head.

¹ See note 2. The Four Ages of the World.

² Note 10. Rakshasas and Yakshas.

Arjuna comes back from Heaven. When the Pāndus were on the Himalayas, Arjuna came back from heaven, seated in Indra's own chariot. He gave his brothers a full account of his adventures, some of which have already been recounted. When his training in the use of the heavenly weapons, which the gods had given him, was completed Indra claimed his teacher's fee. He asked Arjuna to go and destroy the Dānavas,¹ thirty millions in number, who lived in the depths of the Ocean. Arjuna got the loan of Indra's car, and the services of Mātali, his charioteer. The Ocean where the Dānavas lived was full of fishes as large as mountains. In the terrible battle which took place the Demons used not only countless arrows and huge rocks, but also great torrents of water which covered the entire space between earth and heaven. The charioteer was so impressed with Arjuna's prowess, that he said he had seen nothing like it among the gods. Having destroyed the thirty million demons Arjuna was on his way back to heaven, when he saw a beautiful city hanging mid-way in the air. It was called Hiranyapura and was inhabited by Daityas. Two female Daityas, by practising austerities for a thousand celestial years had obtained from Brahmā the boon of this city, with the promise that it could not be destroyed by the gods. The whole city with all its inhabitants, could move through the air, at the will of its inhabitants. They also appear to have possessed 60,000 air chariots as well. Arjuna however prevailed against both the city and the chariots, and completely destroyed all the Daityas. Almost immediately after, the city vanished entirely into space.

Arjuna was asked by his brothers to show them the use of the divine weapons he had received. When he began to do so however the earth trembled and the sun ceased to shine. The gods got very excited and came to the place where he was. Even great deities like Brahmā and Shiva appeared, and by their order,

¹ Note 11 Asuras, Daityas and Dānavas

Nārada the rishi told Arjuna that he must never use his heavenly weapons without a sufficient cause. Otherwise the three worlds of heaven earth and hell might be destroyed.

Who is a true Brahmin Not longer after Arjuna's return from heaven, Yudhishthira met a huge serpent who told him that in his former life he had been the king Nābhusha¹ who as the result of asceticism and the study of the Vedas had acquired the mastery of the three worlds. His great eminence filled him with pride and he used to compel thousands of Brāhmins to carry his palanquin. One day when the Rishi Agastya was carrying the palanquin Nābhusha touched the rishi with his foot. The insulted rishi at once cursed him and changed him into a snake. In reply to the snake's questions, Yudhishthira said that the true Brāhmin was he in whom truthfulness forgiveness good conduct and mercy were found that the Shudra who possessed these qualities was not a Shudra, but a Brāhmin that the Brahmin who had them not was a Shudra. The Pāndu also was of the opinion that it was very difficult to find out a man's real caste owing to the promiscuous intercourse of all the orders. Men were constantly begetting children on women of all castes. The wise men were right who said that character was the most important thing. Manu had declared that if the three higher orders did not regulate their conduct according to the rites of the Vedas, they were worse than the mixed castes.

A visit from Krishna and the Rishi Markandeya As the twelve years of their exile were now almost over, the Pāndus left the Himalaya region and returned to the Kāmyaka forest where they had spent the first years of their banishment. On their arrival they were honoured by another visit from Krishna. Another visitor was the great sage Mārkandeya. This great rishi had lived through the four ages of the world and was many thousands of years old. Despite his age, he looked like a young man of twenty five

¹ Nabusha was an ancestor of the Pāndus. See also page 19

In reply to the questions of the Pāndus, he said that men had originally been created free from sin. They lived for thousands of years, and were able to fly. With the coming of sin, they became subject to disease and death and had to suffer again and again the pains of rebirth on account of their evil deeds. The good and evil that men do follow them like a shadow, and they are not allowed to remain without a body even for a single moment. Having dwelt for some time on the greatness and glory of the Brāhmin caste, the rishi told them about Manu and the fish.

The Story of the Flood Manu¹ was a very great Rishi who performed penances that lasted for 10,000 years. He stood on one leg with uplifted arms and steadfast gaze, all that time. One day as he stood by the bank of a river, a little fish spoke to him and asked for his protection against the bigger fish of the river. Manu took pity upon the little fish and put it into an earthen vessel. This was no ordinary fish. Its body was as bright as the rays of the moon, and in a few days it had grown so big that the vessel could not contain it. It accordingly asked Manu to put it in some bigger place. The rishi then put it into a tank. But though the tank was fourteen miles long and seven miles broad, the fish found that there also it had no room to move. And so it begged the Rishi to put it into the Ganges. But even the Ganges became too small, and Manu took and put it into the Ocean. When it reached the sea, the fish told the Rishi that the dissolution of all things was at hand, and bade him prepare a great strong ark and supply it with a strong rope. When ready the seven Rishis² were to be called, and they with Manu were to enter the ark, and wait the arrival of the fish³. The fish said it would appear in the shape of a horned animal. When the flood began and their ark was tossing on the waters, the fish appeared as it had promised and told Manu to make a noose in the rope and fasten

¹ Note 12. Manu.

² See Genesis vi and vii

³ See Note 3. The Rishis

it to the horn on its head, and thus with their vessel fastened to the horn on the fish's head. Manu and the seven Rishis were towed all over the raging waters which covered not only earth but heaven. For many years the floods prevailed and for many years the fish dragged the boat about. But at last they came to a peak of the Himalayas to which Manu was told to fasten the ark. And then the fish declared itself as the lord of creatures. Brahmā came in the form of a fish to save Manu and the seven Rishis. As every thing with life had been destroyed Manu was given the task of creating all beings gods demons and men, all moving things and also those that are not moveable. This power he acquired by practising great asceticism.

Markandeya describes the four ages of the World. It is now said of Mārkaṇḍeya that he had witnessed not one but many dissolutions of the universe and been present at all the fresh creations. No one in heaven even was older than he except Brahmā himself. The Pāṇḍus therefore asked him to give them an account of the four Yugas or ages of the world. According to this Rishi the four ages together amount to 12,000 divine years and when the four are completed with the close of the Kali Yuga they begin again. A thousand of such cycles comprise a day of Brahmā.¹ When the end of a cycle approaches the inhabitants grow more and more evil. Wicked kings like the Yavanas secure sovereignty. Even the Brāhmins in the Kali Yuga abstain from sacrifice and the study of the Vedas, they desert the ascetic life of the forest and are willing to eat anything. Shudras become prayerful while the Brāhmins neglect the gods. Traders use false weights and are guilty of deceit. Kings oppress their subjects by unjust taxation. Men become short lived and are small and weak in body. Girls of seven and eight years of age give birth to children. Boys of ten or twelve beget offspring. Famine and disease cover

¹ A yuga of the gods is equal to 360 years of men. The four ages together amount to 4 320 000 years. See Not No. The Four Ages of the World.

the earth. When things have come to such an evil pass, the dissolution of the universe is at hand. It is first consumed with fire, and then the fire itself is extinguished by torrents of water which fall for twelve years without intermission. By the end of that time the whole universe is under water. Gods and demons, beasts and men have all perished. The self-created God is left alone in the universe, and we are told that when thus left alone, he goes to sleep.

Markandeya in Vishnu's stomach during a dissolution. Though the universe and all living creatures had been thus destroyed, Mārkaṇḍeya remained, filled with distress to think that he alone survived. Unable to find any resting place, he became exhausted. Before long, however, he saw a great banyan tree, beneath which a boy of great beauty sat on a bed. Though he knew the Past, the Present and the Future, the Rishi could not imagine who the boy was. However when the boy invited him to enter his mouth and rest there, he immediately obeyed. Whenever he did so, he saw in the boy's stomach, the whole earth, with mountains and rivers, cities and kingdoms, beasts and men. He saw too the whole race of the gods with Dānavas and Daityas, Gandharvas, Nāgas and Rishis. He spent hundreds of years in the boy's stomach and finally was violently ejected by a sudden gust of wind. When he got out, he saw the boy in whose stomach he had lived so long, sitting on a branch of the banyan tree. When Mārkaṇḍeya had duly worshipped him and asked who he was, the boy kindly explained. He said he was Nārāyaṇa. In ancient times the waters were called Nara, and because the waters were his Ayana (dwelling place) he was called Nārāyaṇa. He was the Creator and Destroyer of all. He was Vishnu, Brahmā, Indra, Yama, Kuvera, Shiva. Space was his body, the air was his mind. As Shesha the great serpent, he supported the world. He was the sacrifice embodied, he was Soma, he was Kashyapa. The Brāhmins came from his mouth, the Kshatriyas from his arms, the Vaishyas from his thighs, the Shudras

from his feet. The four Vedas issued from him and also disappeared in him. When evil spirits afflicted the earth, he took form as a man, and restored peace by destroying all things.

He further explained that when the grandsire Brahmā awoke, he, Vishnu would once more begin the work of creation. Having said this, the wonderful boy disappeared, and the work of creation at once began. It will be remembered that Krishna was present while Mārkaṇḍeya was giving this description of the dissolution of the universe, and he told the Pāṇḍus that the divine boy, whom he had seen and in whose stomach he had lived was Krishna who had now become their relative, and he urged them to seek his protection. The Pāṇḍus and Draupadī accordingly bowed down in worship of Krishna.

The Kalkī Incarnation. When asked to give a description of the Kali Yuga, Mārkaṇḍeya speaks as if the Pāṇḍus were living in the Dwāpara age. The chief signs he says, that the Kali Yuga has come will be that Brāhmins will speak ill of the Vedas. Shudras will explain religion, and Brāhmins will listen to them, men will become flesh eaters and drink intoxicating liquors, girls will choose their own husbands and the whole earth will pass under the power of low castes and Mlechchhas.¹ When the evil of the Kali Yuga has become complete a Brāhmin called Kalkī will be born. He will destroy all kings. Surrounded by Brāhmins he will thoroughly exterminate all the Mlechchhas, and then celebrate his universal sovereignty by a great horse sacrifice. At this sacrifice he will give the earth to the charge of the Brāhmins. Works of piety will be resumed and men will honour and practise truth. Mārkaṇḍeya adds, 'What I have told you is to be found in the Vāyu Purāṇa. He warns the Pāṇḍus in conclusion, never to insult a Brāhmin, because an angry Brāhmin can destroy the three worlds. It does not matter whether he is wise or ignorant a Brāhmin is always pure. He is superior to a god. When he was asked if any one

¹ Mlechchha a foreigner barbarian man of out caste race

had lived longer than he, Māikandeya said there were a royal sage, called Indradumna, an owl, a crane, and a tortoise all older. He had met and spoken with the four of them¹. In contrast to what we have given above it is to be noted that Mārkandeya gave his hearers a good deal of moral teaching of a lofty kind—as for example

One should conquer the mean by charity, the untruthful by truth, the wicked by forgiveness, and the dishonest by honesty. The honest man thinks any service done to him, a hundred times greater than it really is. The vow of silence, matted locks, the wearing of bark and deer skins, living in the forest and emaciating the body, are all of no use unless the heart is pure. Bliss can come to no man who is full of doubts. Faith is the certain way of salvation. The man who is pure and always practises virtue, even though married, is a real rishi. Fasting and penance, though they weaken the body, cannot destroy sin. Yet he adds also that you can obtain heaven by asceticism and by bathing at sacred places, though complete emancipation is only to be got by knowledge. And in the same chapter this as well. Nothing is higher than gifts, he who gives gold, land and cows to Brāhmins obtains all the regions of Vishnu, Agni and the Sun.

The Story of the Fowler. When Yudhisthira asked the Rishi what constituted a woman's greatness, he was told the following story. One day a Brāhmin called Kausika went to a house to beg for alms from a woman. She told him to wait till her husband came home. When she had fed her husband she would feed him. The Brāhmin asked her if she realized who and what he was. That even Indra bowed down to Brāhmins and they could destroy the whole earth. The woman replied that her husband was her god and that her chief duty was to serve him. As to his bad temper, she would remind him that a true Brāhmin never lost his temper, and always walked in the paths of truth. Indeed he seemed to be a very ignorant

¹ But see page 80.

Brāhmin, and she advised him to go to Mithilā, and see a virtuous fowler who lived there. The Brāhmin apologized, and after some heart searching decided to go and see the fowler. When he arrived, the fowler, who knew beforehand of his coming, was selling buffalo and deer flesh. The Brāhmin expressed regret that he should follow such an unworthy trade. The fowler replied that his occupation belonged to his caste, he was only fulfilling the duties assigned to him by the Creator: he did not eat flesh, nor did he himself kill the animals he sold for food. Besides there was no sin in eating flesh if it had been first offered to the gods and the shades of one's ancestors. The sacred books said that flesh was one of the foods appointed for the use of man. Animals were offered in sacrifice by Brāhmins. In any case it was not possible to refrain from taking life. Trees and fruits were full of living organisms. Sleeping and resting and walking, men were constantly taking life. When people said 'Do not kill,' they did not know the real facts. The fowler thought that a man should fulfil the duty belonging to his own order, and thus obtain merit. For himself he sought to be truthful and charitable. The great thing was to avoid all malice and falsehood, to be full of patience and self control. It was by repentance that men got deliverance from sin. He who committed sin should realize that he was no longer a man. The really wise man did good, hoping for no reward. The knowledge of self was the highest knowledge that a man could acquire. The secret of communion with Brahma could not be explained by any earthly teacher. The fowler also discoursed on transmigration and the diversity of man's lot in life. He also answered a number of questions bearing on psychology and physiology. In a previous birth, the fowler had been a Brāhmin well acquainted with the Vedas. One day, however, he had gone hunting with a king, and unwittingly wounded a rishi. The rishi had cursed him and said that in his next life he would be born as a cruel fowler in the Shudra caste. The

parting advice which the Bīāhmin received was to go home and look after his parents. It would seem that in his zeal for learning the Vedas, he had left his parents, old and blind, to be cared for by others. If he wanted to acquire the highest virtue, there was no better way than that of honouring his father and mother.

Adventures of the Kurus. The sons of Dhritarāshtra, having heard about this time that the Pāndus were experiencing great distress in the forest, resolved that they would go and gloat over their sufferings. They went accordingly, accompanied by their wives and a large army. Indra however sent a large force of Gandharvas¹ to refuse them admission to the forest, with the result that a great battle ensued. Many thousands were slain, and Duryodhana the eldest of the Kurus was taken prisoner. The survivors fled to the Pāndus and asked for their help. Bhīma was delighted to hear of his 'cousins' defeat, but Yudhis-thira said they must not refuse the cry for assistance. Thereupon the brothers set out and in the battle which followed millions of Indra's celestial followers were slain, while Duryodhana was released from his captivity. The chief of the Gandharvas, evidently a little late in the day, asked for a conference in which he explained that Indra had sent him to drive back the Kurus. After mutual congratulations had been indulged in, Indra himself came on the scene, and restored to life all his followers who had been slain. Duryodhana was so ashamed of his defeat that he resolved to stay where he was and live the life of an ascetic. Had he been slain in battle, he would have reached the abodes of eternal bliss. The Daityas and Dānavas realized however that the cause of evil would suffer, should Duryodhana become an ascetic and surrender his rights to the throne. They therefore took to magical rites and by calling up a strange goddess persuaded Duryodhana that his experiences with the Gandharvas, his own captivity and his deliverance by the Pāndus, had been all a dream. Thus persuaded, he returned

¹ Note 13 Gandharvas and Apsarases

to Hastināpura and to his evil ways. Soon after his return he sent out Karna on a career of conquest. Among the countries he conquered were the following Anga, Kalinga, Magadha, Kosala, Mithilā and Mālava, as well as the Yavana and Mlechchha nations. It is said that he conquered the whole world. When Duryodhana wished to celebrate the Horse sacrifice in sign of universal dominion he was told that he could not do so as long as his father and cousins were alive.

Karna loses his Ear rings and Coat of Mail

It will be remembered that Karna was half brother to the Pāndus, and that his father was the Sun. He was born with ear rings and a coat of mail. As he was the bitter enemy of his brothers and the strongest support of the Kurus, Indra resolved that he would get possession of this wonderful armour and thereby make Karna less dangerous. It so happened that Karna had once vowed that he would never refuse anything to a Brāhmin. So Indra disguised himself as a Brāhmin, and going to Karna asked him for his ear rings and coat of mail. Karna did not know what to do. It was his coat of mail which made him unconquerable in battle, while his ear rings derived from amṛita gave him immortality. He offered the Brāhmin his whole kingdom and wealth but he refused. Karna then realized that he was face to face with Indra. His own father the Sun had warned him beforehand not to yield his armour to Indra, unless he got in exchange that god's infallible dart. He asked for the dart, and the exchange was made. Karna cut off the armour from his body and handed it wet and dripping to Indra. By the kindness of the god not a scar or token of the mutilation was to be seen.

The Story of Savitṛi During their stay in the Kīmyākā forest the Pāndus experienced great distress. The deer sent them a deputation asking them to go and live elsewhere, as so many of their number had been consumed as food. At other times the Pāndus were said to have lived entirely on roots and fruits. And no further mention is made of the remarkable

vessel which formerly supplied all their needs¹ Draupadī too was carried off by the king of Sindhu, and only rescued after much difficulty. To comfort the Pāndus, Mārkandeya who was still with them told the story of Rāma and Sītā. His hearers said that they had never heard the story before. It is unnecessary to give any account of it here.² Yudhishthira then asked the rishi if he had ever seen or heard of any woman so devoted to her husband as Draupadī was. This led the rishi to tell him about Sāvitrī. She was the daughter of the king of Madra. She was so beautiful and so full of every virtue that men were afraid to ask her in marriage. When she reached puberty her father decided to let her choose a husband for herself. She accordingly set out on a visit to all the places of pilgrimage in search of a husband. At last she found a youth called Satyavān, living in a forest with his father who had been unjustly driven from his kingdom. The youth was distinguished in every way, as wise as Brihaspati, and as forgiving as the earth. When she came back and told her father about the youth she had chosen, the rishi Nārada who happened to be present said that the youth had only one defect. Within a year, he was sure to die. The girl replied that that made no difference. She had made her choice and would keep to it. Despite her father's appeals the marriage took place. Sāvitrī like her husband and father-in-law lived the life of an ascetic in the forest. She wore the bark of trees as clothing, and worshipped her father-in-law as a god, always careful to control her words. They were very happy together but as the months passed Sāvitrī became more and more burdened in mind. During the last and fatal week, she fasted for three days and nights. On the evil day itself, though weak with fasting, she went with her husband to collect fruits and fuel. It was the first time that she had ever gone far from their dwelling. When out in the woods, her husband began to cut

¹ Page 62

² See English Translations of Vālmiki's and Tulsidās's *Rāmāyana*

down branches. Very soon he suddenly grew ill and had to lie down with his head on his wife's lap. As she thus sat on the ground tending her husband Sāvitri saw some one approach. He was clothed in red garments and wore a crown on his head. He was terrible to look at and carried a noose in his hand. When she asked who he was the stranger said that he was Yama the god of death come to take away the soul of her husband. He explained also that he had come himself as none of his deputies were fit to remove the soul of so virtuous a prince as Satyavān. He thereupon pulled out Satyavān's soul (of the size of a thumb) and thus caused his death. When Yama was going away with the soul, he told Sāvitri to attend to the funeral rites. She answered that where her husband went she would go and despite the continued protests of the god she continued to follow him. As she followed after she so gratified the god by singing his praises, that on four separate occasions, he told her to ask any boon except that of her husband's life. She took advantage of the offer and asked first that her father in law, who was blind might receive his sight next that his kingdom might be restored, thirdly that she and Satyavān might have a hundred sons, and lastly that her own father might have a similar boon. Having granted these four boons, Yama begged the lady to go away and not to trouble him any more. Instead she began to address him in a more pious and persuasive way than ever, with the result that he told her to ask one boon more. She thereupon pointed out that she and Satyavān could not have a hundred sons unless the prince was made alive again and so she insisted on that incomparable boon. To this, Yama making virtue of a necessity cheerfully agreed, and set her husband's soul free. Sāvitri returned to where she had left her husband's dead body, and was overjoyed to find that he was not dead, but sleeping. All the other boons were in due season granted. The old king received his sight, and recovered his kingdom. Satyavān and Sāvitri had a hundred sons born to

them, and lived together in great happiness for four hundred years

Four of the Pandus fall dead. The twelve years of exile were now approaching a close. One more adventure must however be recorded. A stag one day carried off the sticks with which an ascetic was about to kindle his fire. The five brothers were asked to recover the sticks, but despite all their efforts they failed to overtake the stag. Tired and thirsty they sat down to rest themselves. Nakula climbed a tree to see if there was a sign of water anywhere. Descrying a tank at a distance, he set off to bring water for the rest. When he reached the water, a voice forbade him to touch it. He paid no attention, with the result that he fell down dead. The same fate befell Sahadeva, Arjuna and Bhīma, who went one after the other, to see what had happened to their brothers. When Yudhishthira went last of all, he was told by the voice how his brothers had perished. Though overcome with grief to see his brothers lying dead beside the tank, Yudhishthira had the wisdom to ask why his brothers had been destroyed. The voice then gave place to a huge and ugly yaksha, who promised to let the king take some of the water if he would answer some questions that he wished to put. The questions were in the nature of conundrums: what is heavier than the earth, higher than the sky, fleetier than the wind, more numerous than grass? What is it that does not close its eyes when asleep? What is it that does not move after birth? What is it that has no heart? To these and many other conundrums Yudhishthira gave the correct answers, and the yaksha was so pleased that he restored the four Pāndus to life. The yaksha next explained to Yudhishthira that he was really his father, Dharma, the god of justice, and that he had come to confer on them a boon. The boon they asked for was that during their thirteenth year of exile, which they had to spend in an inhabited place, nobody in the three worlds should be able to recognize them. Having granted this boon, the god of justice disappeared.

IV

The Virata Book

THIS book gives an account of the Pāndus during their thirteenth year of exile in the city of Virāta ¹

The Disguise of the Pandus In accordance with their pledge, the Pāndus had to live in an inhabited place during their thirteenth year, and remain undiscovered all that time. Should they be recognized they would have to begin another thirteen years of exile. They fixed upon the capital of king Virāta as a suitable place of concealment. Yudhishthira resolved to go as a Brāhmin skilled in gambling, and Bhīma as a cool specially good at making curries and with some repute as a wrestler and a breaker in of horses. Arjuna in view of the curse that had been uttered against him easily passed for an eunuch, able to teach music and dancing to women. Nakula and Sahadeva determined to seek employment with the king as horse keeper and cow keeper respectively. Draupadī wanted to be engaged as lady's maid to the queen. They all entered the city the same day. Each of the brothers made a great impression on the king. He declared that they were more suited to reign than to serve. However he engaged them all and appointed them to the posts they asked for. Draupadī had more difficulty. When she entered the city she wore one very dirty piece of cloth. She could not however conceal her beauty, and caused a great sensation wherever she went. At last she got to the palace and was seen by the queen. But she was told that she was much too beautiful to keep in a palace. She would be sure to steal the king's heart. To this Draupadī replied that she had five Gandharva husbands, none of whom would see her wronged. It should be noted that Arjuna as an eunuch was sent to

live also in the women's apartments and acted as attendant on the king's daughter Uttarā

The Pandus in Virata. Of their year in Virāta little is recorded. There is one curious passage which says that Yudhishthira by his skill in dice acquired the wealth of the king, and that Arjuna collected the worn-out clothes in the women's quarters and afterwards sold them to his brothers. Bhīma distinguished himself greatly at a wrestling match during a religious festival held in honour of the gods Brahmā and Shiva. The king was so pleased that he made him fight with elephants and tigers. When they had been ten months in Virāta, the queen's brother, Kīchaka who was also commander-in-chief of the king's armies, saw Draupadī and fell deeply in love. After suffering many indignities, her wrongs were avenged by Bhīma who at dead of night wrestled with and slew the wicked Kīchaka. To conceal the fact that Bhīma had come to her assistance, Draupadī declared that it was her Gandharva husbands who had come to the rescue. This statement greatly alarmed the king, and he gave permission to the dead man's relatives to burn her alive with the corpse. Bhīma once more had to interpose, and in the process killed 105 of Kīchaka's friends. The whole city was now alarmed as the rumour spread that the Gandharvas had a second time avenged their spouse, and Draupadī was told that she must depart from the city within thirteen days. Before that time expired, Virāta had other matters to think about, as his country was invaded by the Trigarttas, a people whom his dead general Kīchaka had often defeated in battle.

The invasion of Virata. The king of Trigartta had already invited the Kurus to give him their assistance, and they readily agreed. The forces of Trigartta were the first to advance and in both cases, it was largely a cow-raiding expedition. By the time the invasion took place, the thirteenth year of the exile had already expired. When king Virāta went out against the enemy, he took with him his four

servants, the disguised Pāndus Virāta was victorious and felt so grateful to the four heroes for their assistance that he wished to resign his kingdom into their hands. Meanwhile the Kurus invaded Virāta from another direction, and got close to the capital which was stripped bare of troops. When he heard of their approach Arjuna volunteered to Uttara, the king's son, to act as his charioteer and go out with him alone against the foe. The prince was not enthusiastic about going out alone against the might of the Kurus, accompanied by a single eunuch. However he got ready to set out Arjuna all the while pretending that he did not know how to put on armour to the great amusement of the women who were looking on. When Uttara saw the Kuru forces, his courage left him entirely and he got out of his chariot and made for home. Arjuna followed him however and brought him back, saying that if the prince would act as charioteer, he, eunuch as he was would face the foe single handed. This having been agreed to, Arjuna told his charioteer to drive to a tree for the heavenly weapons which the Pāndus had concealed there prior to entering Virāta a year before. When the prince saw these amazing weapons he demanded to know who Arjuna was. As the thirteen years had expired Arjuna had no objection, and the information gave the prince new courage. When the conflict began the Kurus soon realized that the eunuch who opposed them must be Arjuna and nobody else. He so filled them with terror that many of them wished to flee. In one duel after another he either wounded or rendered insensible all the leaders of the Kurus including Karna, Drona and Kṛipa not omitting the great Bhīṣma himself. In the end the whole Kuru army took refuge in flight. Arjuna wore that day gloves embroidered with gold while a flag staff furnished with a very handsome banner fell from heaven into his car. A golden flag which he had bore on it the figure of a monkey which as well as other animals carried on the flag staff, cried aloud at intervals in the battle.

The Pandus throw off their disguise. Next day the Pāndus determined to inform the king of Virāta who they really were. Accordingly putting on all their ornaments and clothes suitable to their rank, they went together to the king's assembly hall and took their seat on five thrones specially reserved for kings. When he saw them do so, Virāta was very indignant and demanded to know what they meant. Arjuna then explained who they were and asked if a Pāndu was not entitled to a throne. Uttara confirmed Arjuna's statement. The king at once apologized and in token of his regret, and from a desire to appease the brothers, offered his daughter in marriage to Arjuna. That prince declined the honour for himself, saying that when living in the women's apartments, he had always treated the princess as a preceptor should treat his disciple or a father his daughter, and men would mock and say unpleasant things were he now to make her his wife. As a proof that he held the princess in every respect, he would gladly accept her for his son Abhimanyu, the son referred to, was accordingly sent for and the marriage took place. Many princes were present. Among the marriage guests was the bridegroom's uncle, Krishna, who came from Dwāraka, attended by ten million horses, ten billion cars and one thousand million of infantry.

The Effort Book

THE 'Udyoga Parva' in which each side prepares for war. In this as in other books the preliminary salutation is to the Supreme Deity, Nārāyaṇa, and to the highest of all male beings Nara.

The Kurus and Pandus both seek the help of Krishna When the marriage was over, Virāṭa consulted with the assembled kings as to how they could assist the Pāṇḍus. Krishna declared that he desired the good of both parties and advised the Pāṇḍus to send an ambassador to their cousins. For the present he would go home, he did not wish to take part, as he was equally related to both. His brother Balarāma frankly put the blame on Yudhishthira, saying it was he who challenged Duryodhana to play. He too said that he would take no part in the battle. Balarāma's unjust charge roused the anger of Sātyaki who advocated immediate war. Draupadi advised that while they made attempts at reconciliation they should lose no time in securing promises of help from other kings. It was agreed to send Draupadi's priest as an ambassador to the Kurus. Very soon after Krishna's departure, Arjuna followed him to Dwāraka to ask his assistance. When he arrived he found that Duryodhana had got there before him and was already seated at the bedside of Krishna who was asleep. Arjuna took up his position at the foot of the bed. When Krishna opened his eyes, he saw Arjuna first. They both began to invite Krishna's help. Duryodhana declaring that he had the prior claim as he had been the first to arrive. Krishna rejected this plea on the ground that he had seen Arjuna, before he saw Duryodhana. However he said he would treat them both equally by giving help to both. On the one hand, he offered himself not as a

combatant but as a friend and adviser, on the other, he offered 100 million Nārāyana soldiers. He gave the first choice to Arjuna. Without the least hesitation Arjuna chose Krishna. This seemed a very foolish choice to Duryodhana, and he went off with great delight, accompanied by the mighty army that Krishna had given him. Krishna was so pleased with Arjuna's choice that he promised to act as his charioteer.

Shalya and Duryodhana. The king of Madra, named Shalya uncle of the Pāndus, was on his way to help his nephews. When he heard of his coming, Duryodhana prepared beautiful pavilions, at one of the stages where he had arranged to encamp. Shalya supposed that his nephews had made these preparations, and was much pleased. When he learned that it was Duryodhana's act, he felt that he must offer him a boon. The wily Duryodhana at once invited him to become commander-in-chief of the Kuru army. In this way both Shalya and his forces were lost to the Pāndus. Shalya felt it necessary to go and explain the circumstances to his nephews. Yudhisthira assured him that he could not have done otherwise. A man must fulfil the promise he had made. He had one favour to ask, however, and it was a strange request for a man like Yudhisthira to make. It was that Shalya should act as charioteer to Karna, and do all he could to dishearten him. To this Shalya agreed.

How Indra lost and won his throne. By way of comfort Shalya told his nephews a story about the god Indra. There was a great devotee, named Twashtri who, out of hatred to Indra, created for himself a son with three heads. This son read the Vedas with one mouth, drank liquor with a second, and with the third gazed so earnestly that it seemed as if he would swallow all the points of the compass. His piety was so great that Indra trembled for his throne and, as was a not uncommon practice, the god sent a large number of nymphs to try and seduce him from the paths of virtue. Their efforts failed and Indra finally smote him with his thunderbolt. As he lay senseless on the

ground Indra caused a wood cutter to cut off his three heads. From the headless trunks, great numbers of birds flew out. Before yielding to the order of the god the wood cutter warned the deity that it was a great sin to kill a Brāhmin. Indra replied that he would see to that and purge his soul by severe penance. When Twashtri heard of his son's death he created a demon called Vritra¹. In a great battle that ensued, the demon swallowed Indra much to the consternation of the other gods. They however created a yawn and the demon being compelled to yawn Indra seized the opportunity and got out. It was only by the help of Vishnu that the demon was eventually slain. In the meantime, however, Indra discovered that it was not so easy to escape the guilt of killing a Brāhmin. Afraid of his life he went and hid himself in a lotus which grew in a lake in the centre of an island, far out to sea. Ignorant of Indra's whereabouts, the gods were in despair. Without a head both heaven and earth were in a state of anarchy. No other god was willing to accept office. Finally a king called Nahusha, one of the denizens of heaven was persuaded to accept the kingship of the celestials. His position alas, filled him with pride. He demanded that Indra's queen should attend him and do what he desired. That virtuous lady repelled his advances but on the advice of Brihaspati she pretended that she wanted to think over the matter and asked for time to do so. Brihaspati's plan was that in the interval a thorough search be made for Indra while Vishnu advised that Indra's sin of murdering a Brāhmin be absolved by a great horse sacrifice. Indra's wife at last discovered where her husband was. When he heard her story he told her to go back to heaven and tell Nahusha that she would be his wife when he got for himself a finer car than any of the gods had ever possessed. Such a car was possible, he instructed her to say, if, instead of horses, he caused the seven rishis to carry it. Blind to his impending downfall, Nahusha did as he was asked and harness

¹ Appears in Vedas as the demon of drought

ing the rishis to his car compelled them to carry him about the streets of heaven. In the meantime the gods had also gone to see Indra, and had great difficulty in persuading him to pluck up courage and come back to heaven. It was finally agreed that the lordship of the celestial regions be divided between Agni, Kuvera, Yama and Indra. While they were still talking, however, the rishi Agastya came with the welcome news that Nahusha had been hurled from heaven. It would appear that one day when the rishis were tired with carrying Nahusha about in his palanquin or car, they asked him if certain hymns in the Vedas were authentic. Nahusha replied that they were not and began to quarrel with the rishis. Then, in his folly, he touched the head of Agastya with his foot. This one act was enough to deprive him of all the strength and dignity that the gods had given him, and Agastya immediately cursed him to descend to earth. He lived there for ten thousand years in the form of a serpent¹. The gods were greatly delighted to get this news and, accompanied by Indra, at once returned to heaven.

Sanjaya's mission to the Pandus. The visit of Draupadi's priest to the capital of the Kurus served little purpose. The aged Bhīshma pleaded for a compromise, while Karna and Duryodhana declared that they would not yield one foot of land to the Pāndus. The old king however decided to send Sanjaya, his charioteer, as an ambassador to his nephews in the hope that some terms of peace might be arrived at. Sanjaya was very favourable to the Pāndus, yet he did his best to persuade them not to fight. He discoursed at great length on the evils of strife. 'Better to live as a beggar than gain your kingdom by war. Life is short and full of evil. The Kshatriya life is only fit for butchers. Wrath is a bitter remedy to heal the world's woes. You have gained great fame in the forest. If you now yield to malice, all your good deeds will have been in vain.' Peace-loving though he was, Yudhishthira did not like these observations, and he said,

¹ See Page 85

he would appeal to Krishna to say if it was wrong for them to fight. In reply, Krishna said that some people declared that it was by knowledge that men got salvation, others said it was by deeds. His opinion was that the gods had gained the merit and dignity they possessed through work. The sun never slept and rose every day without fail. The earth carried her great burden unceasingly. The rivers never failed to carry their waters to the sea. It was by work that Indra maintained his great position in heaven. Only fools thought otherwise. A king's duty was to protect his subjects and to kill robbers. The Kurus had done evil, and deserved to be punished. And yet they had the impertinence to send a messenger to preach to them about peace! Despite all this, Krishna was anxious to help, and proposed to go himself to the Kurus to see if nothing could be done while Sanjaya was sent back with the generous offer that if the Pāndus got five villages, one village for each brother they would refrain from war.

Vidura's Philosophy When Sanjaya got back from his visit to the Pāndus it was evening and he refused to say more that night beyond expressing his conviction that if peace was not arrived at the Kurus would be utterly destroyed. The old king in his anxiety could not sleep and spent the night talking with his brother Vidura. It will be remembered that Vyāsa the rishi was their father, but Vidura's mother was a low caste. A very long discourse by Vidura running to many pages is given. It deals with the wise man and the fool, the beauty of forgiveness, the evil fruits of anger and so on. Some quotations are given. 'He is a wise man whom neither anger nor pride can turn aside. He is a wise man whose acts are not hampered by cold, heat, fear, lust, prosperity or adversity. He is a wise man who does not exult in honours to himself and grieves not at insults. That man is a fool who enters and speaks unasked, who delays in doing what should be done quickly. He is the worst of fools who blames others, when he ought to blame himself. Forgiveness subdues all things. What

can a wicked man do to one who has the sword of peace in his hand The forgiving man has one defect, people consider him to be weak There are three roads to hell, desire, anger and greed There are three kinds of men, good, bad and middling Good manners are the prime thing in life He who has not got good manners, gains nothing by life, wealth or friends Bathing in all the holy places and kindness to all creatures, these are equal, perhaps kindness is better A wine-seller, a pander, a violater of other men's wives, an atheist and a scorner of the Vedas are on the same level as he who kills a Brāhmin Gold is known by fire and an honest man by his conduct The gods seek the society of the man who when reviled does not revile, and who when struck does not strike back. The pain felt by him who endures revilings patiently, consumes the reviler Harsh words burn the very bones and heart of a man Happiness and misery, loss and gain, death and life come to all men in turn The wise man, therefore should be neither glad nor sorry Women, kings and serpents, no wise man puts his trust in these When you are weak, flatter your enemy, when you are strong, kill him You should never trust a woman, a thief or an atheist Falsehood is the worst thing in a man, curiosity in a chaste woman It is by dying in battle that a Kshatriya obtains heaven'

When Dhritarashtra began to ask questions about the Supreme Soul and man's immortality, Vidura said that, as a low-caste, he was not permitted to speak of such matters By the exercise of his mental power, however, Vidura brought into their presence a mysterious being, the eternal rishi Sanat-Sujāta, who discoursed to the two brothers The rishi's observations have been translated by K T Telang and under the name of Sanatsujātīya appear along with the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Anugītā* in volume viii of the 'Sacred Books of the East.'

Of the conference held next day, by the Kurus, it is not necessary to give a detailed account Bhīshma, still anxious for peace, declared that Arjuna and

Krishna were together the mysterious Nara Nārāyana¹ and could therefore not be overcome. But Duryodhana said he did not care who they were. He was an expert at incantations, and by means of incantations he could overcome them. If the gods had wanted to help the Pāndus, they would have helped them long before the thirteen years expired. His experience was that the gods did not help any body. It was by an absence of hatred and indifference to worldly affairs that the gods had secured their divinity. The Pāndus had gods for their fathers and they had not intervened as yet. Though he extolled the greatness of the Pāndus, and was convinced that they would be victorious, Sanjaya never mentioned Yudhishthira's offer to be content with five villages as his share of the kingdom. Gāndhārī the mother of the Kurus, and Vyāsa their grandfather both tried to persuade Duryodhana to yield but to no purpose. The blind old king believed it would be madness to fight the Pāndus but he weakly added that he could not resist his sons. He put the blame on Destiny saying that human effort was always in vain.

Krishna goes to the Kurus At a fresh conference of the Pāndus both Bhīma and Arjuna unexpectedly began to speak in favour of peace and urged Krishna to go and see the Kurus as he had formerly suggested. Indeed Bhīma spoke so strongly in favour of being polite even to Duryodhana that Krishna suggested that he was afraid. Draupadī too lost her temper with her too gentle husbands and began to weep. In the end Krishna agreed to go but the omens were all against any hopes of success. Seven large rivers began to flow in a contrary direction the cardinal points were reversed and the whole earth was enveloped in darkness. When news of Krishna's coming reached Hastināpura Duryodhana objected to any preparations being made for his reception. As a result, on his being invited to eat with the Kurus, Krishna refused on the ground that men should only eat with those they loved. He took his food with Vidura.

¹ See Note 15 Nara Nārāyana

At the conference which Krishna attended on the following day 3,000 kings were present, and it was addressed not only by Krishna, but by the great rishis Kanwa and Nārada, who told a number of old legends to show how pride was always humbled. Duryodhana grew tired of listening to moral tales so obviously directed against himself and got up and left the assembly. Krishna then urged the old king to do what he had already suggested in the presence of Duryodhana, namely to arrest his son and hand him over to the Pāndus. In the meantime, however, Duryodhana was planning a counter-plot to seize Krishna himself. When Dhritarāshtra heard of this proposed insult to the sacred person of an ambassador he became very angry and ordered his son to appear. Krishna, however, took the insult very quietly and after rebuking the prince for his folly made a sudden manifestation of his divine form. Thousands of gods issued from his body, each of them the size of a thumb. From his eyes, mouth and nose, Rudra (Shiva) continuously emerged, while Brahmā sat upon his brow. Dhritarāshtra asked that he might receive his sight, so as to be able to behold so glorious a spectacle. His prayer was granted.

With the assistance of Kuntī, who was the mother of Karna, as well as of the Pāndus, Krishna tried to win Karna over to the side of the five brothers. He promised that if Karna would join them, the Pāndus would give him a sixth share of their rights over Draupadī. He was even told that as the oldest all the rights of sovereignty would be conceded to him. To these offers Karna replied that though Kuntī was his mother she had forsaken him when he was a child, and left him to be considered as the son of a charioteer and his wife. When his mother tried to win him, her efforts were supported by a voice from heaven, the voice of his father, the Sun-god, urging him to yield to his mother's appeals. But Karna remained obdurate. If he deserted the Kurus, men would say he was a coward, nor was he able to forgive

his mother for allowing him to be reared as a man of humble rank, when he was really a Kshatriya and the offspring of the gods

Both sides prepare for war The forces of the Pāndus amounted to seven full armies or akshauhīnis, those of the Kurus to eleven. As an akshauhīni consists of 21,870 chariots, 21,870 elephants, 169,350 foot soldiers and 65,610 cavalry, the two hosts combined would amount to 382,860 chariots, 382,860 elephants, 1,180,980 cavalry, and 3,048,300 infantry. There were in addition a certain number of men attached to each chariot and elephant while we are told that the camp followers, workmen, physicians, women and children were a great multitude. The armies are frequently spoken of as numbering many millions and we have already seen that Krishna lent 100 million soldiers to Duryodhana. Both armies directed their steps to Kurukshetra,¹ where Yudhishthira chose a suitable field wide and open, with a plentiful supply of water. Despite his affection for the Pāndus Bhishma agreed to act as leader to the Kurus hosts. He had formerly said that the cause of the Kurus was hopeless but he now asserted that with him as commander they would certainly prevail. He foolishly taunted Karna with being a coward, an insult to which Karna replied by saying he would take no part in the battle till Bhishma had been slain. The battle which began the following morning was destined to last for eighteen days.

¹ Usually identified with Pānpat to the north of Delhi.

VI

The Bhishma Book

GIVES an account of the first ten days of battle under the leadership of Bhīshma

So many men were gathered together on the field of Kurukshetra that the whole earth seemed to be empty. Only children and old people remained at home. The encampment of soldiers covered many miles. Before the battle began it was agreed that foot soldiers should fight with foot soldiers, horsemen with horsemen, and so on. No one was to be refused quarter, while the attendants, charioteers and drummers were not to be assailed. Vyāsa proposed to restore the sight of Dhritarāshtra that he might be able to witness the battle, but he declined. He said he had no wish to see the slaughter of so many relatives and friends. Sanjaya his charioteer, however, was endowed with the power of knowing every thing that took place, and throughout this book and the three following we have Sanjaya's account of the battle as he described it to the king. Vyāsa said that Sanjaya would be made acquainted with everything that happened by night or day, whether open or hidden, even what men planned in their minds, nor would any weapon be able to touch him. In view of the approaching slaughter strange omens and portents were seen. Asses were born to cows, women gave birth to five daughters at one time, immediately after birth their infants began to dance and sing. The images of the gods smiled and trembled. They vomited and perspired, and sometimes fell down.¹ The water in the rivers turned into blood.

Sanjaya's description of the Earth. In view of Sanjaya's endowment with miraculous power Dhri-

¹ One of the very few references to images in the *Mahābhārata*

tarāshtra asked him to give a description of the earth and its inhabitants. His curiosity was roused by the fact that so many millions of men had gathered from all quarters at Kurul shetra. Sanjaya replied that the earth on which we live is called Sudarshan. It is full of mountains and rivers, and is surrounded by the salt sea. Across it from east to west stand six great mountains called Himavat, Hemakūta, Nishadha, Nila, Sweta and Sringavat. The space between each is 7 000 miles. In the centre of all there is the great mountain Meru 588 000 miles high. It supports the upper world on its shoulders. The sun, moon and stars all revolve round this mountain, which is a favourite haunt of the gods and other celestial beings. It is from this mountain that the Ganges takes her source. Four islands, Bhadrāswa, Ketumāla, Uttara Kuru and Jambudvīpa lie near mount Meru. On one of these, the people live for 10,000 years. They are of a golden complexion and are free from all sickness and sorrow. In another, there are trees which yield milk, food of all sorts, clothes and ornaments while the ground is covered with gold and gems. In another the people live for 13,000 years and do not require to eat any food. They are entirely free from sin. In Jambudvīpa¹ is a tree called Jambu 7 700 miles high. Its top reaches heaven. It is also called Bhārata. When asked to describe this land of Bhārata, on which we live, Sanjaya gave a long list of its mountains, rivers and countries. Seven great mountains form its boundaries: Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Shuktimat, Vindhya, Gandhamādana and Paripātra. Chief among its rivers are the Gangā, Sindhu, Saraswatī, Godavarī and Narmadā. The names of over 200 countries or provinces are given. They include Panchāla, Kalinga, Kosala, Kāshī, Chedi, Chola, Bhoja, Kerala, Anga, Drāvidā, Mālwa, Andhra, Magadhā, Avantī (Mālwa).

¹ Note. According to the Purāṇas Jambudvīpa implies the central division of the world and corresponds to the known world including India. Beyond the salt sea which surrounds it are alternately fresh continents and oceans seen in number. Sanjaya's account is both confused and contradictory.

Nishāda¹ The Shakas (Scythians), the Hunas the Yavanas (Greeks), the Chīnas and the Mlechchhas (foreigners, out-castes) are also mentioned. In Bhārata-varsha or the land of Bhārata, there are four Yugas or ages. In the first, the Krita-Yuga, men lived for 4,000 years, and in the second, the Tretā-Yuga, for 3,000 years. Sanjaya says we are living in the Dwāpara-Yuga, and in this age men live for 2,000 years. The portion of the Dwāpara-Yuga that still remains is very short. When the Kali-Yuga comes, there will be no fixed period for men's lives. They may even die in the womb, or soon after they are born.²

The Seven Continents and Seven Seas. It is next explained that there are seven continents or islands and seven seas, but the names of only five are given. Each island is said to be double the size of the other, as they extend towards the North. Their surrounding oceans are composed of ghee, curds, wine and water. With the nature of Jambudvīpa we are familiar for it is the continent in which we live, but the inhabitants of the other islands never die. They are generally white in colour and they have only one religion. The supreme lord of creation lives there, and is the source of their happiness. The moon is said to be 77,000 miles in diameter and the sun 11,000 miles more. The planet Rāhu, because of its great size, is able to cover them both and thus cause eclipses.

The Bhagavadgita. When the two armies stood face to face and before any fighting had begun, Arjuna was filled with sorrow and sadness. He saw no benefit to be gained by slaying his friends and kinsmen. He wanted neither victory nor dominion. They might kill him, but he would kill none of them, not even to obtain the sovereignty of the three worlds. Finally throwing aside his bow and arrows he sat down in his car. Krishna who according to promise, was acting as

¹ For the location of many of these provinces of ancient India see Vincent Smith's map in his *Early History of India*.

² The claim that the heroes of the *Mahābhārata* lived in the Dwāpara age, should be noted,

Arjuna's charioteer, told him that he was suffering from a delusion unworthy of a Kshatriya. His conduct would shut him out of heaven and bring disgrace on his name. He grieved for those who did not deserve grief. Wise men grieved for neither the living nor the dead, 'neither I nor you nor these kings were ever non-existent and none of us will hereafter cease to exist. The questions which Arjuna put and the answers which Krishna gave compose the philosophic poem of the Bhagavadgītā¹. In the end Arjuna declares that his doubts are dispelled. He takes up again his bow and arrows, and prepares for the fight.

Yudhishthira's visit to the Kurus Still another event occurred which delayed the battle. Suddenly and without warning Yudhishthira descended from his chariot and leaving his armour and weapons behind him advanced with joined hands towards the Kurus. Seeing him go, the Pāndu chiefs followed full of wonder and anxiety. Yudhishthira first approached Bhishma and asked his blessing. Bhishma told him that if he had not come he would have cursed him, and caused his defeat. Now he blessed him and said he would be sure to win. He also told him to ask a boon. When Yudhishthira said, Tell us how we may cause your death, for you are invincible in battle. Bhishma replied that he was to come and ask that question at another time. Yudhishthira then approached Drona, Kripa and Shalya. They not only gave him their blessing but said they would pray every day for victory to the Pāndus. All those who witnessed this noble act of Yudhishthira's were filled with wonder and admiration. Both Aryans and Mlechchhas were so impressed that they began to weep.

The first ten days battle Of the many deeds of valour recorded, it is impossible to give any detailed account. Every day thousands and hundreds of thousands of men were slain. The earth was covered with dead and wounded men and horses and elephants, with shattered chariots and broken weapons, with

¹ See Note 14 Bhagavadgītā

gailands and necklaces of gold. The earth covered with these things appeared as beautiful as in spring time, when she is covered with blossoms. Rivers of blood swept over the ground

We have already seen that before the conflict began Krishna had to encourage Arjuna to fight. On the third day of the battle, Krishna had again to rebuke the reluctance of his friend. Indeed the god left his chariot resolved to share in the battle himself, despite his promise not to do so, and it was only with great difficulty that Arjuna held him back. On the ninth day matters were growing very serious for the Pāndus. Bhīshma was causing great havoc among his opponents and putting whole armies to flight. Much though he loved the Pāndus and disapproved of the Kurus, he had promised to help the latter and his reputation as a warrior was at stake. Krishna declared that until Bhīshma was killed the Pāndus could not hope for victory, and once more he told Arjuna that he appeared to be either unwilling or afraid to fight and, in particular, afraid to attack Bhīshma. To this Arjuna replied, 'You bid me fight to what end? To acquire sovereignty with hell as a reward for killing those who ought not to be killed. Tell me if that is better than living in the forest.' Almost immediately after, Bhīshma wrought particularly severe havoc among the Pāndus, and Krishna could restrain himself no longer. Throwing the reins of the chariot to Arjuna (he was Arjuna's charioteer all through the battle) and with whip in hand, he advanced to meet Bhīshma. When the aged warrior saw him advance, he held out his hands in worship and praised the day that should see him so highly honoured as to be slain by him who was the god of gods. But Krishna, alas, had forgotten his promise not to fight. Arjuna however had not forgotten and so rushing after him, he seized him by the legs and told him that men would call him a liar if he ignored his plighted word. Without saying a word in reply, but full of anger, Krishna resumed his place in the chariot. That night when the disheartened

Pāndus met for counsel Yudhishthira announced he was going back to the forest, while Krishna declared that despite his promise not to take part in the battle, he was resolved to kill Bhishma. Otherwise there was no hope of victory. Eventually it was arranged that they should obey Bhishma's own command when he said 'Come and see me again.' Accordingly they all went to see Bhishma. He quietly told them that they need not hope to win, so long as he lived. Yudhishthira then put the strange question they had put before, namely, 'Tell us how we can bring about your death.' By this time Bhishma was weary of fighting and anxious to be slain. So he told them to oppose to him in battle, Sikhandin the son of King Draupada. He was appointed to die by that prince's hand.¹ If Arjuna and Sikhandin together attacked him and Sikhandin stood before him, he would not lift a weapon against him. In a previous birth this youth had been the daughter of the King of Benares and had suffered wrong at the hands of Bhishma. As the result of great austerities, she had received a boon from Shiva that in her next incarnation she would be born as a man, and obtain revenge on Bhishma. In her next life, she was born not as a boy however but as a girl in the family of King Draupada. She managed eventually to exchange her sex with a Yajña, and as prince Sikhandin came with his (or her) father's army to help the Pāndus and achieve the object of all her toils, the death of Bhishma. The old hero knew who Sikhandin was and what he had been and that he now sought his death. Quite apart from his conviction, that the boon promised by the god Shiva must be accomplished he declared that he would never fight with a woman even though her sex had since been changed.

Bhishma is overthrown On the tenth day of the battle, the Pāndus having received this advice placed Sikhandin in the forefront of every attack on Bhishma. When the old warrior thus placed at so grievous a disadvantage, finally fell, his body was so full of arrows that

¹ See Appendix No. The Woman whose Sex was Changed

it could not touch the ground and the arrows as it were formed the bed on which he lay. The physicians of the camp wanted to extract them, but he refused permission, saying that he wished these arrows burned along with his body. To assuage his thirst, he asked Arjuna to bring him water fit for a hero to drink. With an arrow Arjuna smote the earth and a fountain of water at once burst forth. The two armies stopped fighting to come and look at the dying man. The great sages, also, in the guise of swans came from heaven, while the actors and courtezans, the trumpeters and other camp followers hurried to the scene. Bhīshma however was determined not to die just then. His father had granted him two boons. The one was that it would not be possible to kill him in battle, the other that he should die at whatever time he chose to appoint. And so, despite the greatness of his agony, he refrained from dying until the sun should pass to the northern solstice.

VII

The Drona Book

Describes Drona's leadership and death. It extends to nearly 400 closely printed pages, and covers five days of the battle.

When Karna heard that Bhishma was dying, he went and asked forgiveness for the cruel words he had spoken. Bhishma gladly forgave him. At the same time he urged both Karna and Duryodhana to make peace. With Bhishma out of the fray, Karna was released from his vow not to fight and began to boast that his presence in the battle would put the Pāndus to flight. Drona, the son of the rishi Bhīradwāja, was appointed commander of the Kurus. In their youth both Kurus and Pāndus had learned from him the use of arms. He was in command for only five days. Though he accepted the position, he told Duryodhana that no one could hope to overcome Krishna, the world's creator, in alliance with Arjuna unless it were the god Shiva himself. He reminded him also that in the army of the Pāndus there was a prince Dhrishtadyumna who was destined to kill him. King Draupada, out of hatred to Drona, had years before offered sacrifices to that end and from these sacrificial fires Dhrishtadyumna had been born.¹

Realizing the difficulty of winning in open fight, Duryodhana made a great effort to separate Arjuna from Yudhishthira, and take the latter prisoner. He was convinced that if he did so, the Pāndus would agree to go back to the forest, and thus secure their brother's release. Five brothers of the Trigartta country, with their army, vowed that they would accomplish this and

, ¹ For the strange birth of Dhrishtadyumna and his sister Draupadi, see page 45.

at once attacked Krishna and Arjuna. Great havoc was wrought among the Pāndus, and Arjuna and Krishna were compelled to assume thousands of different forms, even at times making themselves invisible. Arjuna, too, used a variety of celestial weapons, in particular the Vāyu (wind) weapon, which carried away hosts of men, horses, elephants and chariots, as if they were so many dry leaves. The whole army of the Trigarttas was eventually wiped out. So much blood was shed that it flowed in streams and caused the dust of the earth to disappear. A great warrior called Bhagadatta also attacked Arjuna. This prince made use of the Vishnu weapon. Had it not been for Krishna Arjuna would have been slain. The god however stepped forward and received the stroke in his own breast. This act once more made Arjuna rebuke Krishna for abandoning his office of charioteer and taking part in the battle, contrary to his own definite promise not to fight. Krishna replied that in former days he had himself (i.e. as the god Vishnu) given this very weapon as a boon to Naraka, the son of the Earth. From him it had passed into the hands of Bhagadatta. Against the giver alone could it strike in vain. Indra and Shiva even would have died had they been struck by it. Having thus justified himself Krishna told Arjuna to slay his foe. Robbed of his divine weapon Bhagadatta was easily slain.

Death of Abhimanyu. Arjuna had a son called Abhimanyu. His mother was Subhadra the sister of Krishna. Though a mere boy he performed prodigies of valour. The Kurus were fiercely accused of killing him in unfair fight. A large part of this book tells of Arjuna's efforts to get face to face with Jayadratha, one of the warriors responsible for his death. The Kurus did all they could to stand between him and Arjuna's wrath. He was further protected by the fact that he had got, as a result of very great austerities, the promise that in a single car and single handed he would resist and check, if not overcome, the whole army of the Pāndus. To help Arjuna in

facing so powerful a foe, Krishna engaged in Yoga meditation, and even resolved to take part in the battle himself. This night before Arjuna succeeded in killing Jayadratha. Arjuna, also, gave himself up to the worship of Shiva. His special object in doing so was to secure from that god the famous Pashupata weapon. Having sat down to meditate and adore the god, Arjuna soon found himself and Krishna being wafted through the skies and finally brought into the presence of the god who has a thousand eyes. Krishna at once began to sing Shiva's praises as the creator of the Universe, the source of all, the cause of the Past, the Present and the Future. On the other hand, Shiva welcomed them under the names of Nara and Narayana, the two foremost of men¹. He finally announced that he would grant them whatever they desired. To his great amazement, Arjuna then saw lying beside Shiva the offerings he had nightly presented to Vishnu. The weapon Pashupata, which they asked for, consisted of a bow and arrow, which lay at the side of a lake, in the form of two great snakes. The repetition of an hundred verses from the Vedas however changed the snakes into their real form. Having got the bow and arrow, Krishna and Arjuna descended from the skies and returned to Kurushetra.

Even with this weapon, the slaying of Jayadratha took a long time. Arjuna was attacked by 100,000 soldiers who discharged so many arrows at him that the sky was darkened. Great numbers of Mlechchhas, too, born from the cow of the rishi Vasishtha, with Yavanas and Shakas thus forming a force that was innumerable, all stood between Arjuna and his purpose. In the end Krishna darkened the Sun and, under cover of the darkness, Arjuna succeeded in cutting off Jayadratha's head. By means of arrows Arjuna had the dead man's head carried through the air and dropped into the lap of the dead man's father as he was sitting at prayer. In this contest Krishna drove

¹ See Note 15. Nara Narayana

the chariot so quickly that often the arrows which Arjuna shot were left two miles behind

The Great Deeds of Ghatotkacha. It will be remembered that Bhīma had a Rākshasa son, called Ghatotkacha¹. This Rakshasa came to assist the Pāndus. He had an aeroplane four miles long and four miles broad. He was able to disappear from view whenever he liked, able also to take the form of a mountain, covered with trees, with water pouring from its summit. His car was drawn by strange creatures which looked like elephants. Ghatotkacha was attended by a whole army of Rakshasas, who ate human flesh and drank blood like their master. Against Ghatotkacha the Kurus were able to engage two other Rakshasa princes. These two were attended by large numbers of followers and one of them had an aeroplane similar to that which Ghatotkacha possessed. Ghatotkacha was eventually killed by Karna. When he fell, he was so huge in size that he crushed to death a whole akshauhini of the Kuru army. Before he succeeded in killing Ghatotkacha, Karna had to use the infallible dart that he had got from Indra in exchange for his ear-rings and coat-of-mail. This was a great blunder, as the infallible dart could only be used once, and Karna had hoped to use it against Arjuna. Despite their sorrow for the loss of Bhīma's demon son, Karna's fatal blunder greatly elated the Pāndus, while the Kurus were correspondingly depressed.

Drona Deceived and Dies. The battle after the death of Ghatotkacha waxed so hot, that the contending forces did not stop fighting even when darkness fell. The Kurus and Pāndus got large numbers of lamps and torches which they attached to their chariots and elephants and horses. When the celestials saw what they were about, they also supplied such a multitude of lights, that the field of battle looked like the firmament studded with stars. Drona specially distinguished

¹ The birth of Ghatotkacha, see page 44

himself in this all night battle. He pierced, with his arrows, millions of men and hundreds of millions of horses. As he was causing so much havoc that Krishna declared they must take refuge in deceit. He proposed that they should tell Drona that his son Ashwatthāman had been slain. To this proposal Arjuna objected very strongly. Yudhishthira only consented when Krishna assured him that otherwise they would most certainly be overcome. To meet the moral difficulty it was arranged that Bhīma should kill an elephant, bearing the same name as Drona's son, and then approaching the father tell him that Ashwatthāman was dead. Knowing what was true, Bhīma accordingly advanced and said what was not true. When the old man heard that his son was dead, he at once lost all courage and his limbs dissolved like sand in water. But then he thought: It is not possible that my son should be slain, and resumed the battle with his old eagerness. The thought however rankled in his mind, and he approached Yudhishthira. He was certain that Yudhishthira would not tell a lie even to get the wealth of the three worlds. And so he questioned Yudhishthira, persuaded that he would tell the whole truth. Aware of that prince's regard for truth, and aware too of why Drona was approaching them, Krishna warned Yudhishthira that if he did not lie the Pāndus would be utterly destroyed. It was not a sin, he said, to tell a lie in order to save life. It was not a sin to tell a lie to a woman or in connexion with marriages or to save a cow or a Brāhmin. And so to obtain the victory, Yudhishthira replied to Drona: 'Yes, Ashwatthāman is dead.' He added under his breath the word elephant. Up to that time Yudhishthira's chariot had always travelled two inches above the surface of the ground. But when he uttered this falsehood, his steeds touched the earth. Putting his trust in the word of Yudhishthira, and believing that his son was really dead, Drona fainted away. Though he ultimately recovered and put up a great fight, killing another twenty thousand men in the

course of an afternoon, Drona was eventually slain by Dhrishtadyumna, as had been appointed by the gods. At the last moment he laid aside his weapons and sat down in the attitude of meditation, devoting his thoughts to Vishnu, and pronouncing the sacred letters OM.

Drona's son seeks to avenge his father's death. When Drona was killed, the Kuru army took refuge in flight. They were, however, eventually rallied by Ashwatthāman. He told the Kurus that he had in his possession an invincible weapon with which he would slay the whole of the Pāndus. This weapon, called Nārāyana, his father had originally got from the god Nārāyana, with the promise that its user would be invincible in battle. He had been warned to use it very carefully. It could even slay the unslayable. When Ashwatthāman began to invoke this wonderful weapon, the earth shook, and the ocean trembled, even the gods became afraid, while the Pāndus were filled with great dread. Recriminations too arose among the Pāndus. Arjuna declared that Yudhishthira had done a great sin in deceiving Drona, his old teacher and friend, and a Brāhmin. For himself he was persuaded he would have to go to hell for his share in so great a wickedness. Bhīma however told Arjuna to stop preaching. He was talking like a Brāhmin and ought to go and live in a forest, seeing he was so keen about observing the laws of morality. He was not fit to be a Kshatriya, ignorant as he was of the duties of his caste.

Dhrishtadyumna, the slayer of Drona, was not at all abashed by the observations of Arjuna. He retorted that Drona was only a Brāhmin in name. A Brāhmin's business was to teach, offer sacrifices and receive gifts. Drona was a fighter and an unfair fighter, seeing he used weapons that ordinary men did not and could not possess. Such a person, calling to his aid such unusual weapons, must be met and slain by whatever methods one could employ. Yudhishthira was not a liar, and he objected very strongly to being described as a wicked

person This bitter discussion almost led to blows, and was only brought to an end by Krishna, who very discreetly took no part in the debate

That divine being had most fortunately thought of a plan to overcome the might of the Nārāyana weapon Being as he was, indeed the god Vishnu or Nārāyana, he had himself conferred this weapon on Ashwatthāman's father Drona He was therefore acquainted not only with its powers but also with its limitations The divine weapon was powerless against those who had no weapons in their hands This was one of the conditions laid down when the gift was made Accordingly when the battle was resumed and Ashwatthāman began to invoke the use of the Nārāyana weapon, the Pāndus were consumed before it, like dry grass in summer But Krishna at once called to them to throw all their weapons to the ground and the slaughter ceased When he saw that the Nārāyana weapon had been rendered useless (like the infallible dart it could only be used once) Ashwatthāman called into existence another weapon the Āgneya This instrument associated with the god of fire wrought great damage also among the Pāndus, but Arjuna was able to match it by one still mightier a weapon created by Brahmā himself When he saw himself thus rendered powerless, Drona's son cast aside his bow and, jumping from his car, fled from the field of battle, crying out 'Alas! alas! everything has proved untrue'

Shiva greater than Vishnu When he was running away Ashwatthāman met Vyāsa the rishi and asked him how it was that his weapon had been unable to slay Krishna and Arjuna both of them possessed of human attributes Vyāsa explained that Nārāyana, the most ancient of the ancients the creator of the worlds, had performed great austerities in the Himālayas as a result of which he had become equal to Brahmā and in particular been favoured with a vision of Shiva There was no doubt said Vyāsa that Shiva was the Lord of all the gods the origin and protector of the

world, smaller than the smallest, larger than the largest. He is called Rudra Hara, Sambhu, Time, Brahmā, the Vedas, all things have sprung from him. It was in language like this that Nārāyana had praised and worshipped Shiva and in reward was told that neither gods nor demons nor men would ever be able to conquer him in battle. 'It is this god, Nārāyana or Vishnu, who now roams the world under the name of Krishna. As a result of his ascetic practices there was born to him a son, a great rishi called Nara. This Nara is Arjuna.'¹ Krishna should be worshipped at every sacrifice, but Krishna himself worships Shiva and under his phallic form.

After parting from Drona's son, Vyāsa went to the field of battle. There he met Arjuna who told him that he had witnessed a wonderful sight. A male, being, shining like fire, always advanced in front of him. He never touched the earth, and though he never struck any one with his trident, thousands of arrows were always streaming out of it. He begged Vyāsa to tell him what this amazing portent was. The rishi told his grandson that he had been highly favoured. The great god Shiva, whom the gods of heaven adore, had come to his help. There was no one else in heaven or in earth who could put to flight such mighty foes as the Kurus. Attended as he was by followers of all sorts of hideous shapes, the gods even were afraid of his wrath and sought in vain to hide themselves in the deepest caves of the earth. He had torn out the teeth of Pūshan and destroyed the sacrifice that his father-in-law Daksha had prepared. The almighty Brahmā had sung his praise and said he was the only refuge and supporter of the world. It was no wonder then that Arjuna had fought and prevailed.²

¹ This is still another parentage for Arjuna and a new conception of the relationship between Nārāyana and Nara. See Note 15.

² These passages in praise of Shiva and the help he had rendered Arjuna are of great interest as also the passage at page 119, in view of the fact that up to this point, all the credit of victory has been given to Krishna, the incarnation of Nārāyana or Vishnu.

The same benefits are to be got from reading the Drona parva as are acquired by reading the Vedas. You will be delivered from the bondage of sin and secure desirable sons and grandsons. To a Brāhmin it is as good as a sacrifice. By reading it a Kshatriya obtains victory in battle.

VIII

The Karna Book

Gives an account of Karna's leadership and death

It was now necessary for the Kurus to appoint a commander of their army in place of Drona. On the proposal of Ashwatthāman the son of Drona, Karna was unanimously chosen. Ashwatthāman who was famous for his eloquence made an interesting speech in which he declared that zeal and perseverance were the conditions of success, though every thing in the long run depended on Destiny. But he was also of the opinion that Destiny could be made favourable if they only tried hard enough, and had recourse to honest expedients. No doubt he was reflecting on the unfair way in which his father had been deceived and killed. Karna made a very boastful speech on receiving his appointment, and he was duly installed at an elaborate function in which Brāhmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras of high social position took part. He was presented with vessels of silver and gold, full of water that had been rendered holy by the repetition of verses from the Vedas. The new general made the usual gifts of gold and cows to the Brāhmins, and received their blessings. Karna immediately after made the request that Shalya king of Madra should act as his charioteer. This proposal, when he heard of it from Duryodhana, made Shalya very indignant, and he demanded to know why a great monarch like him should be asked to do the menial task of driving the car of a man, who was himself the son of a charioteer. In view of his promise to Yudhishthira, as we find it in the beginning of the Effort Book, this indignation was manifestly only assumed. However Duryodhana managed to mollify him by saying that

Krishna was acting as Arjuna's charioteer. Krishna was a bigger man than Arjuna, and as for Shalya he knew twice as much about horses as Krishna did. He further told him an interesting story¹ of how in days gone by, in a battle against the Dīṁvas Shiva had said that he must be assisted by a charioteer who was superior to himself, whereupon Brahmā the grandsire the creator of all creatures, offered his services. The car on which they rode was fashioned by the architect of the gods and the different deities the Vedas the sacred letters OM Time and Speech the Sun and Moon, the Twilight Hours Virtue Profit and Desire, Mount Mandara and the Ganges had all been used in the shaping of the car. Vishnu and Agni had been the dirt which Shiva had wielded and which he had used to overwhelm their foes. Duryodhana also expressed his belief that Karna was never really born in the family of a charioteer. He was certain that he must be the son of a god, and that his real mother had abandoned him in infancy. He had been given a celestial weapon by no less a person than Rāma of the Axe, and this weapon in turn had been presented to Rāma by Shiva himself.

If persuasion was really necessary it was impossible for Shalya to refuse, after listening to such arguments. He expressed himself as greatly pleased at being told he was a bigger man than Krishna and said he would act as Karna's charioteer, if he was allowed to say what he liked. When the battle began he certainly made full use of his stipulation, and many pages record the taunts and jibes by which he sought to discourage and enrage Karna. He declared that in seeking to oppose Arjuna, Karna was like a dog barking at a tiger, a deer contending with a lion, or a frog croaking at the sun. He was as far removed from Arjuna as poison from nectar, and

¹ See Appendix No 5. Brahmā Shiva's charioteer.

Rama of the Axe an incarnation of Vishnu is here spoken of as an ordinary man. These passages once more exalt Shiva at the expense of Vishnu.

falsehood from truth. These taunts roused Karna to fury, and he retorted by declaring that all the women in Shalya's country were drunken and impure, that even at the gates of his palace, there stood a slaughter house for cattle, and a place where liquor was sold. Despite his boasting, these taunts however began to tell. Indeed Karna opened his heart to Shalya, and told him how he had once happened to kill a calf belonging to a Brāhmin, and in consequence had drawn the Brāhmin's curse. He had besought the Brāhmin to take back the curse, offering untold wealth in exchange, but it was as usual of no avail. What the Brāhmin had decreed must take place, otherwise his word would be proved untrue, and curses cannot fail. The curse was that his chariot wheels would sink into the earth, in time of battle, and his heart would be seized with fear.

Quarrel between 'Yudhisthira and Arjuna.

When the fighting really began, Karna showed that his boasts were not in vain. He succeeded in putting to flight the eldest of the Pāndus. This humiliation made the usually gentle Yudhisthira lose all control of himself, and when he met Arjuna he taunted him with cowardice, and said if he was not going to use his famous Gāndīva bow to more purpose, he should hand it over to somebody who could. Arjuna had once sworn an oath that he would kill the man who ever dared to suggest that he should part with his bow, and so despite his great unwillingness to kill his brother, who was the best of men, it was absolutely necessary to redeem his vow. Fortunately Krishna was present, and pointed out that to refrain from killing even an animal was one of the cardinal virtues. A falsehood was a less grievous sin than killing one's eldest brother. It was a foolish vow to take, and there were times when untruth wore the garb of truth and truth, of untruth. It was not an easy thing to be righteous, and there were very nice points involved in all questions of morality. He had heard of a man who acquired virtue by killing an animal, and of a Brahmin who was sent to hell,

because he told the truth To meet Arjuna's scruples however, Krishna explained that addressing one's superior as 'thou and thee' was as bad as murder If he wanted to kill his brother, let him do so with his tongue Arjuna gladly accepted the suggestion and abused his brother soundly putting on his shoulders the weight of all their sorrows since the time when his love of gambling drove them to the forest But when he had finished his insults and as it were, slain his brother with his tongue Arjuna was so filled with remorse that he once more drew his sword but this time with the intention of killing himself Here was a fresh difficulty and as Krishna explained having been saved from the sin of fratricide he was now going to be guilty of suicide The two sins were on a par and involved condemnation to the same hell This difficulty was however met also, and Arjuna was told to kill himself by self praise The man who did that was as bad as one who committed suicide When Arjuna had duly boasted of all he had done and all he would do, he fell at his brother's feet and was fully reconciled

Bhima slays Duhshasana and drinks his blood

It will be remembered that when the Pāndus lost Draupadī at the gambling match, Duhshāsana grossly insulted her with the result that Bhīma swore that, when he met him in battle, he would slay him and drink his blood It was on one of these days that Bhīma got his opportunity After a stiff fight he succeeded in throwing Duhshāsana to the ground It is said that tearing open the breast of his prostrate foe, he drank his warm blood, saying it was sweeter than his mother's milk sweeter than honey and wine sweeter than the very drink of the gods Those who witnessed the incident were so overcome with horror, that they fled in all directions crying out that Bhīma was a Rākshasa, and not a man

Karna killed by Arjuna This book gives an account like the others detailing the battle of the thousands who were slain, and of the knights in golden armour who bit the dust The great event however was that in which Karna met his end at the hands of

Arjuna The contest between them excited so much interest even in heaven, that the gods with Indra, Brahmā and Shiva all came to look on. Śanjaya who still continues to recite the story of the eighteen days battle to the blind old king, says it was really a wonderful sight to see the sky covered with gods, Nāgas, Asuras, Yakshas, Rākshasas, Rishis, and birds. The denizens of the earth were filled with admiration as they beheld so many gods, and listened to the songs and laughter which filled the air. Some of the gods asked Brahmā to decree that the fight between Arjuna and Karna should end in a draw, but the grandsire said that could not be. He was willing that Karna should go to heaven like other Kshatriyas, but in the past he had sided with the Dānavas, who were enemies of the gods. In any case Arjuna was so powerful that he could overrule destiny itself. When Brahmā gave this as his opinion, Shiva showed his concurrence by nodding his head. Though Karna fought with great vigour, he was very much hampered by the recollection of the Brahmin's curse. He even forgot to make use of the celestial weapon that Rāma had given him. When his chariot wheels did sink into the earth, as the Brahmin had decreed, Karna leapt from his car, and put forth a great effort to raise them. And raise them he did, but along with the car, he raised the earth herself, with her seven continents and seven seas, to a height of four cubits. The wheels remained sunk in the earth as before. When he appealed to Arjuna to excuse him for a little, till he had set things right, it was not the duty of a Kshatriya to strike a man when he stood helpless on the earth. Krishna told him it was too late to appeal to the teachings of morality, and bade Arjuna strike. It was not so easy, however, and it was only after a great struggle that Karna fell. His head was swept from his body by an arrow, which was inspired by all kinds of incantations. From the headless trunk a light burst forth, which passing through the sky entered the sun. It will be remembered that Surya the sun-god was his father. When they saw their leader slain, the Kurus had no courage left them and they took refuge in flight.

IX

The Shalya Book

Recounts the last days of the battle Shalya was made the new commander, but was very soon slain Duryodhana and three others the sole survivors of the Kurus

Though the numbers on each side had been greatly thinned, we still read of heroes who, single handed, withstood a whole army, and slew twenty five thousand men in a few hours It is thus Sanjaya tells of men taking refuge in flight, of raging elephants and terrified horses, warrior fighting with warrior a scene of awful carnage that filled brave men with joy, and cowards with fear Arjuna destroyed 2,000 cars Yudhishthira smote Shalya with 300 arrows Celestial weapons, that were invoked and sped upon their way by various incantations, were used by more than one combatant The use of one celestial weapon called forth the use of weapons more powerful Shalya, whose loyalty to the Pāndus has been already seen by the way in which he sought to discourage Karna, was without any opposition, appointed to the command of the Kurus After a great fight Yudhishthira slew his friend by means of a flaming dart that had been made for Shiva and was inspired with fierce mantras It had been used by Shiva against the demons in days of yore When Shalya was killed the Kurus felt that their cause was hopeless and, though Duryodhana managed to rally them for a time, they eventually fled from the field of battle The panic spread to the camp and with tumultuous weeping the wives of the Kurus, accompanied by eunuchs and priests stampeded in the direction of the capital Hastināpura Yuyutsu the only son of Dhritarāsthra who had sided with the

Pāndus received permission from Yudhishthira to follow them and make arrangements for their safety. This Yuyutsu was only a half brother of the Kurus, as his mother was a woman of the Vaishya caste. The Pāndus must have pursued and slain the fugitive Kurus, for it is said that there were only four survivors among them, namely Duryodhana, the old king's eldest son, Kripa a Brāhmin warrior, Kritavarman, and Ashwatthāman the son of Drona. As for the Pāndus, all the five brothers still lived, while of their army there still remained 10,000 infantry, 5,000 cavalry, 700 elephants, and 2,000 chariots.

Flight of Duryodhana and his companions.

The Pāndus were very anxious to seize Duryodhana, but though they searched everywhere for him and sent out spies, they could find no trace of him whatever. The explanation was that Duryodhana, as he had once boasted before, was an adept in the use of incantations. In his flight he came to a lake, and by his power of illusion, he entered into the water and having done so changed the water into a solid mass. Having met the omnipresent Sanjaya, he bade him tell his three friends, who still survived, where he was. These three survivors immediately hurried to the spot and, standing by the lake side, pleaded with Duryodhana to come out and make one more attempt to achieve victory. The prince replied that he was very tired and would stay where he was that night. This conversation was heard by some hunters who immediately hurried to the Pāndus, and told them that they had discovered the whereabouts of Duryodhana. The Pāndus at once hastened to the lake, while Duryodhana's friends of course took refuge in flight. Yudhishthira was the spokesman of the Pāndus, and at once began to taunt Duryodhana with cowardice for thus hiding himself in the depths of a lake, and abandoning the duty of a Kshatriya. The Kuru replied that his fighting days were done, he was going to the forest, to live as an ascetic, and Yudhishthira was welcome to rule the empty earth, which they had all helped

to rob of its inhabitants. In the end Duryodhana, becoming uncomfortable at the taunts that were cast at him, said that he had no armour, no chariot and no friends. He could not be expected to fight them all at once. But he was willing to come out, if they would fight him one by one and lend him a weapon. Then Yudhishthira made a great blunder and he replied 'Fight any one of us you like, and choose any weapon you like. If you kill any one of us, I'll give you back the kingdom.' Duryodhana quickly seized at the offer said he would fight with a mace a mode of warfare at which he was an expert, and with any one of the brothers that they cared to choose. When Krishna heard this foolish speech of Yudhishthira's he became exceedingly angry. The foolish prince was once more staking his kingdom on what was after all a game of chance, and as far as he could see the issues were not uncertain. Duryodhana had no equal in the use of the mace and if any one of the five fought according to the rules he was certain to be defeated. Bhima however assured Krishna that he need not worry. As they were talking Balarāma the brother of Krishna appeared on the scene. He was born from a white hair of Vishnu, just as Krishna was born from a black. He had declined to take part in the battle between the cousins and gone off on a pilgrimage to many of the sacred places of India.

This book says he was friendly to the Kurus, and wanted Krishna to help them. The Udyoga book says merely that he refused to help either side. When the battle began between Duryodhana and Bhima it soon became plain that despite Bhima's prowess, he would not be able to slay Duryodhana unless he took refuge in some trick forbidden by the laws of honourable warfare. Krishna accordingly expounded his views on the subject to Arjuna. The gods had used deceit in the battles with the demons and what the gods did, men were permitted to do. In the past eighteen days he had frequently used his illusory powers and helped to kill the Kurus. If he had not adopted wily and

deceitful ways, they would not have been in possession of their ancient kingdom once more. Acting on this advice Arjuna made a sign to Bhīma to smite his opponent on the thigh. Bhīma was quick to take the hint, and smiting his enemy on a place that was forbidden by the rules of battle brought poor Duryodhana to the ground.

The Pāndus and their friends were greatly ashamed at this base action of Bhīma's. In particular, Balarāma freely spoke his mind, declaring that Bhīma was an ignorant wretch, unacquainted with the code of war. When Krishna tried to pacify him, and to prove that Bhīma had done quite right, Balarāma said that his opinion remained unshaken in spite of all Krishna's arguments. All the world would know that Bhīma was a wily warrior, while the righteous Duryodhana would acquire eternal blessedness. The celestials seem to have approved of Balarāma's sentiments, as a great shower of sweet smelling flowers fell from heaven on the wounded man, and the spectators heard the heavenly choirs singing his praise.

The Pāndus enter the camp of the Kurus.

Leaving the wounded Duryodhana lying where he fell the Pāndus took possession of the abandoned wealth of the Kurus. When Arjuna and Krishna descended from their car, a wonderful thing happened. Its mysterious ape standard vanished into the air, while the car itself burst into flames. Krishna explained that it had been really destroyed already, over and over again, but owing to his presence it had been saved from destruction. At the request of Yudhishthira, Krishna went on to the capital itself to convey the sympathy of the Pāndus to the old blind king and Gāndhārī on the loss of their hundred sons. Childless as they now were, the aged couple must look to the Pāndus to discharge the funeral rites and other duties which only a near kinsman could perform. Yudhishthira too was afraid that Gāndhārī might curse them, especially in view of the unfair way in which Duryodhana had been treated, and she was in virtue of her austerities capable of destroying the three

worlds. Seeing that Krishna was the Creator and the Destroyer, the first cause of all the worlds, the eternal, Yudhishthira thought that he would manage to pacify the angry queen. The god agreed to do so and addressed words of advice and consolation to the heart broken parents.

X

The Book of Slumber

The 'Sauptika Parva'. The adjective Saupṭika means 'belonging to sleep'. This book tells how the Pāṇḍu army was destroyed while asleep.

Ashwatthāman with his uncle Kṛipā and Kṛitavarman came back to the spot where the Pāṇḍus had left the dying Duryodhana. In his presence Ashwatthāman took a vow that he would slay the rest of the Pāṇḍus, and was solemnly appointed commander of the forces of the Kurus, now reduced to three able bodied men. They then set off towards the south, and at evening took refuge in a forest, lying down to rest beneath a great banyan tree, in which thousands of crows were roosting. His two companions slept but, despite his exhaustion, Ashwatthāman could not sleep. He was ever revolving thoughts of revenge. He was particularly anxious to slay Dhṛiṣṭadyumna who had killed his father Drona, and Śikhandin who had killed Bhīṣma. They were both the sons of Draupada king of Panchāla¹. As he lay awake under the tree, Ashwatthāman saw a huge owl come quietly and destroy the crows that were sleeping on the branches. This incident suggested to him the idea of killing the Pāṇḍu army as it lay asleep. He at once wakened his companions and proposed that they should go and carry out his scheme. Such a wicked proposal greatly shocked the other two, and Kṛipā declared that such an act would be unworthy of a Kṣatriya. Ashwatthāman however dwelt eloquently on the unjust and treacherous fighting of the Pāṇḍus, particularly insisting on the cruel way in which his own father had been slain. In the discussion Kṛipā more than once contradicted himself, at one stage declaring

¹ See pp 45, 115 for the account of the birth of these two sons of Draupada.

that he would be glad to go, at another maintaining that such baseness would plunge them into hell. In any case they set off for the camp of the sleeping Pāndus. For some reason not explained the five Pāndu princes were not in the camp having gone elsewhere by the advice of Krishna.

The Kurus encounter Vishnu and Shiva When the three Kurus got to the gate of the camp they were met by a mysterious being of great size who blocked their progress. This figure wore a great snake round his upper arm, his teeth were terrible to look at, but his face had a thousand beautiful eyes. Blazing fire came out of his mouth, nose and ears. Not at all afraid Ashwatthāman shot countless celestial arrows at this terrible spectre but he absorbed them all like the Vadaṁ fire, drinking up the ocean. He then discharged his dart, his scimitar, his mace in quick succession but the same thing happened to them all. When all his weapons were exhausted, and the son of Drona stood helpless and unarmed he at once beheld the sly filled to over flowing with images of Vishnu (Krishna) and he realized that he was a fool to try to do what was forbidden by the scriptures, namely to kill men when they lay asleep. But even as he deplored his folly he went on to declare that he would take refuge in Shiva the god who is adorned with a necklace of human skulls and the plucker out of Bhaga's eyes. He then began to sing the praises of the great god Shiva the creator and lord of the Universe the pure the dreadful the refuge of hermits, the friend of ghosts, the divine the dweller in burning ghāts. As he thus spoke a golden altar came into view and on it a blazing fire that filled the whole sly with its brightness. Countless spirits too creatures of all shapes gathered on every side. They had the faces of camels and jackals cats and tigers cows and bears, snakes and ducks. Some were fat some were lean some were bald, others had great heads of hair and they danced and sang crying aloud in the most hideous manner. These were the awful attendants of Mahādeva, at whose feats their master always

wondered and rejoiced, regarding them in thought, word and deed as his own children. Filled with rage, they are ever drinking the blood, and eating the fat of those who hate Brahmā. They had come in the hope of beholding the slaughter of the Pāndus. For them also Drona's son had no fear. He was resolved on what he was about to do. It was to offer up his own soul as an offering to Shiva. And so with awful rites he prayed to Shiva, the doer of awful deeds, offering himself in the hour of his distress, and asking the god to receive him, And thus praying Ashwatthāman entered the blazing fire that lay on the golden altar. As he thus stood in the flames, Shiva appeared to him and said that Krishna had duly worshipped him with truth, purity, ascetic practices and forgiveness. None was so dear to him as Krishna, and for Krishna's sake he had protected the race of Draupada until that time. But he would protect them no more. 'The hour of their death had come. When he had thus spoken, Shiva entered the body of Ashwatthāman, giving him as he did so a great and shining word.¹

The sleeping Pandu army slain. Thus possessed by Shiva and escorted by the frightful attendants of that god Ashwatthāman entered the camp of the sleeping Pāndus, leaving his two friends to guard the gate, and kill all who tried to escape. It is a gruesome tale that follows. First of all the sleeping Dhrishtadyumna was attacked and slain, kicked and trodden under foot by his un pitying foe. The cries of his women folk and guard roused many in the camp, but in the confusion and fear, the Pāndus made matters worse by killing one another. The attendants of Shiva too appear to have joined in the battle. At least we are told that on every side what seemed to be horrible looking Rākshasas were to be seen drinking the blood of the slain, and gorging themselves with human flesh. Kripa and Kritavarman also played their part, and did not allow a single Pāndu to escape alive by the gate.

¹ This is one of the most amazing stories in the *Mahābhārata*, and once more shows the desire to exalt Shiva at the expense of Vishnu.

The whole of the Pāṇḍu army had thus been slain with the exception of the five Pāṇḍu princes Krishna and his friend Śātyaki. Having accomplished their purpose the three Kurus once more visited the dying Duryodhana, still lying where they had left him, quite alone except for the hyenas and wolves that waited impatiently till he should die. The joyful news filled the prince with great gladness and so bidding them all meet him in heaven and declaring that with the slaughter of so many foes he was now equal to Indra himself he passed quietly into the other world.

The pursuit of Ashwatthāman Among the Pāṇḍus who were slain were the five sons of Draupadi whom she had borne to her five husbands. Her grief was great and she declared that she would neither eat nor drink, till the wicked murderer of her sons had been slain. Drona's son had been born with a wonderful gem in his head, and she demanded that that gem should be brought back and shown to her as a proof that the wretch was no longer alive. There was however great danger involved in any attempt to seize and kill Ashwatthāman. He had got possession of the greatest celestial weapon in all the universe. It was called the Brahmastra. His father had given it to him with great reluctance, but told him never to use it, even in the hour of extremity. Nobody knew however what such a person, when at bay, would do and if he used it the whole world would be destroyed. Krishna said that on one occasion Ashwatthāman had had the audacity to come to Dwāraka, and offer to exchange the Brahmastra for one of Krishna's own. Krishna scornfully told him he was welcome to take any one of them that he was able to wield but the presumptuous fool had found that he could not even lift them. When Krishna asked him why he wanted one of his weapons so much he replied. If I had got it I would have fought with you.

Before Krishna told all this Bhīma had set off in pursuit of Ashwatthāman, and Krishna said they must follow at once and see that Bhīma was not killed

Travelling with Krishna in his celestial car on whose standard the mighty Garuda was perched, the four Pāndus overtook Bhīma, just as he reached the place where Ashwatthāman was sitting on the banks of the Ganges. Drona's son was engaged in conversation with Vyāsa, the grandfather of the Pāndus and Kurus, and many other Rishis. When Bhīma began to draw his bow, Ashwatthāman plucked a blade of grass and by the invoking of many mantras and incantations, transformed it into the great Brahmastra weapon, to which reference has been made¹. Krishna was greatly alarmed. It was a weapon calculated to destroy the three worlds and he at once told Arjuna to fit to his bow the great Brahmā weapon, which so far he had never dared to use. It alone was able to neutralise the other. When the two weapons were discharged peals of thunder were heard, thousands of meteors fell, the earth quaked, and the sky was filled with fire. Had it not been for Vyāsa and Nārada, who also appeared on the scene, the universe would have been set on fire. When the two Rishis had remonstrated with the two combatants Arjuna agreed gladly to withdraw his weapon, which he was able to do in virtue of his past asceticism. Ashwatthāman however could not recall the blade of grass which he had so wonderfully inspired, and it accordingly entered the wombs of the Pāndu women with a view to destroying all hope of progeny. The damage however seems to have been limited to the daughter-in-law of Arjuna, and her unborn son was killed. Krishna however interposed and restored life to the foetus, and a son was eventually born, the illustrious Parikshit², whose death by snake bite led to the great snake sacrifice at which the Mahābhārata was first recited. Krishna also cursed Ashwatthāman to wander over the earth for 3000 years without a companion and unable to talk to any one. The gem with which he was born was taken from his brow, and duly

¹ One would infer sometimes that the power and energy of these celestial weapons are invoked on special occasions, at other times, they are spoken of as weapons themselves.

² See page 29

given to Draupadī. When Yudhishthira asked Krishna how it was that a very ordinary warrior like Drona's son had been able to kill all the sleeping Pāndus, he was told that all Ashwatthāman had done had been by the power and grace of Shiva. Shiva was the highest of all the gods. He had assisted Brahmā at the creation though he had quarrelled over the matter with Brahmā and gone off to the mountains to engage in austerities. In the Krita Yuga too when the gods were celebrating a great sacrifice in accordance with Vedic ordinances, they had been so foolish as not to invite Shiva. They had neither proposed that he should assist them, nor share in the offerings. However when Shiva heard of what they were doing, he came wearing the garb of a devotee, and with a bow in his hand. When they saw him approach the gods were greatly alarmed. The wind ceased to blow, fire would not burn. The light of the sun decreased. Assuming the shape of a deer the sacrifice took refuge in flight and she was followed by the god of fire. It was on this occasion when he was so angry that Shiva broke Savitrī's arms, plucked out the eyes of Bhaga, and drove the teeth of Pushan down his throat. Eventually the gods managed to appease Mahādeva. They promised that in future he would always get the clarified butter at every sacrifice. And thus the world was saved. But Krishna assured Yudhishthira of the fact that when Shiva got angry matters were very serious indeed. When he was pleased everything was all right. Ashwatthāman had managed to please Shiva, and he had got his reward. He had been able to slay not only the two sons of Draupada but Draupada's sons as well, and the whole of the remaining forces belonging to the Pāndus and their allies.

NOTE: It would be difficult to find a legend that illustrates more clearly the power of sacrifice. Here Shiva forsakes those whom he had previously befriended and personally sets in an act which repugnant to the moral sense of ordinary men. The gods represent though by powerful ones in the hands of men. Bhaga and Pushan are less demanding than Aditya. They as well as Savitr are Vedic deities. Rudra is the chief of a somewhat similar story in the Vedas.

The Book of the Women

STRI-PARVA tells how the wives of the Pāndus and Kurus weep over the slain

Dhritarashtra visits the battle-field. When the old king heard that the last of his hundred sons was slain, he gave himself up to grief. His brother Vidura sought to comfort him, but it was to little purpose. It was necessary however that the formal rites should be performed, and a great company of women, including Gāndhārī and Kuntī the mother of the Pāndus, and accompanied by shop-keepers and other citizens journeyed to the battle-field itself. On their way, they were met by the Pāndu brothers, who were coming to meet them. Dhṛtarāshtra received the courtesies of Yudhishthira very coldly, and very reluctantly yielded to his embrace. But when Bhīma approached him as he thought, he clasped him in a close embrace. It was the old man's intention to crush his nephew to death, in revenge for the slaughter of Duryodhana. But Krishna had realized what the blind king would try to do, and instead of Bhīma had substituted an iron image. As the king possessed the strength of ten thousand elephants, the image was crushed to pieces. His own breast however was considerably mangled in the process, and after vomiting blood, he fell to the ground. When he discovered what had happened, Dhṛtarāshtra repented of his treacherous act, and quite cordially embraced all his nephews in turn. The Rishi Vyāsa told him a story also which proved that his son Duryodhana was fated to cause all the sorrow that had taken place. One day when he was up in heaven, the earth had come protesting that she could no longer bear the weight of so many people, and that the gods

must come and that quickly to her relief. Vishnu had promised that her relief would be achieved by means of Duryodhana (who was really an incarnation of Kali). He would cause the deaths of so many millions of men that the burden would be greatly lightened. When Yudhishthira was asked how many had been killed in the eighteen days' battle he answered that 1660 millions of persons had fallen while 20165 had escaped.¹

Gandhari's lament It was not so easy to appease Gāndhārī and in fear of her Arjuna was compelled to hide behind Krishna. Bhishma was bolder and declared that what he had done he had done to save himself. He could not have killed Duryodhana in fair fight. As to the charge of drinking the blood of Dushisana his other cousin he stoutly denied it. His hands had only been smeared with his blood. Vyāsa was very afraid that Gāndhārī would curse her nephews and did every thing to calm her. It is said that owing to her angry glance falling on the feet of Yudhishthira he suffered for the rest of his life from a sore toe nail.

Krishna cursed by Gandhari Krishna was not so fortunate. She accused him of indifference to the slaughter. If he had liked he could have prevented it. He had a huge army, he was eloquent, he could have forced them to make peace and this universal destruction would not have taken place. She had not much ascetic merit, but she would use it all to bring down curses on his head. Even as the Kurus and Pāndus had perished so would the family and nation of Krishna, the Yadus perish, and in a horrible manner. And even as the wives of the Kurus and the Pāndus had had to weep so would the wives of the Yadus weep thirty five years after, over the slain, men slain by the hands of their brothers and sons.

Krishna accepted the curse and thanked her for it. He himself was seeking to bring about the destruction

of his own race, and her curse would be a help. But it would not be more than a help. The Yadus could not be killed by any one but themselves, neither gods nor demons nor men could prevail against them.

The funeral rites performed. Gāndhārī then indulged in a long and touching lament for the slain.

The bodies of the princes and other distinguished persons were burned with due honour on handsome funeral pyres. Sandalwood, ghee, oils and perfumes were brought together in large quantities. The other dead were piled in great masses and duly burned. When these last rites had been concluded with every token of affection and regard, Yudhishthira and the Kuru ladies went to the banks of the Ganges for the performance of the water oblations. There Kuntī told her sons that Karna was their eldest brother.¹ A piece of information which filled the Pāndus with fresh grief, as they thought of the enmity with which they had for years regarded him.

¹ Yudhishthira was very angry at his mother having kept the secret of Karna's birth so carefully. He declared that in future no woman would be able to keep a secret again.

The Book of Consolation

Shanti parva This is the largest book of all. It contains nearly 600 pages of closely printed matter in the Calcutta translation. It sets forth mostly Bhishma's views on morality, the duties of Kings, and the doctrine of renunciation.

Yudhisthira says he is going back to the Forest Yudhisthira was so overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of having been the cause of the deaths of so many brave men that he announced his intention of retiring to the forest. He declared that the whole Kshatriya order was accursed. Might and valour and wrath had always been their bane. They had fought like dogs over a piece of meat and now as the victorious dog he had no pleasure in what he had won. This lust for earthly things could only be crushed out, by a life of renunciation by fasts and sacrifices and vows, in the forest. There freed from action, and desire he would purify his soul. His brothers protested violently, asking why they had fought if this was to be the result. He was like a man who begins to dig a well and stops just before he gets to the water. He was neglecting the duties of his order, which was to fight with other kings and protect his own subjects. They told him a story about Indra sending back to their homes some young men who had gone to the forest with the words that the life of a householder was the truest renunciation. They quoted the Vedas also to the same effect, that the householder's mode of life was equal to the other three put together on the condition of course, that a man gave away the wealth he had acquired to the Brahmins. As for killing one's enemies it was no sin to kill them. The gods had killed the Asuras their elder brothers. The beasts were

constantly killing one another Even ascetics could not live without killing some living creature Some animals were so minute that the moving of the eye-lids killed them The gods that were most worshipped were all destroyers, while remorseless Time came to all and carried all away So let him fight his foes as other Kshatriyas did Worship the gods and offer sacrifices with many gifts to the Brahmins. That was the teaching of the wise Besides it was not possible to kill the soul. So one could not be said to kill any body

The soul passed from body to body, like a man moving to a new house They told him too of King Janaka, and how his wife by her wise words persuaded him from becoming a forest dweller She said it was only a poor man, abandoned by his friends who could find happiness in the shaven head, and the brown robe of the ascetic It was not for a king who had fed thousands of Brahmins to go and ask these very men for a handful of grain. If all men became beggars, who would be left to feed them. Men thought they became free from desire because they wandered about with the beggar's bowl, but they were still in bondage to desire, were it desire for a handful of barley and nothing more it would still be desire He could remain a king, and yet break the fetters of the world. If he did that he would really be a liberated man, and in the end reach the regions of the blessed Yudhishthira was not persuaded He admitted that the Vedas were conflicting in their teaching Sometimes they preached action, sometimes they bade men refrain from acts For himself he thought their praise of wealth was quite wrong, and he was certain that men reached a higher state of bliss by way of renunciation The practice of Yoga without a doubt procured salvation, though in these days, he confessed there were men going about, giving lectures to large numbers of people, denying the existence of the soul, and speaking against the doctrine of liberation They were very learned men, well versed in logic, but they were wicked men and fools for all that

The two rishis Devasthāna and Nārada then took part in the discussion. The former advised him to do his duty as a king for the present, and afterwards he could go to the forest. The four modes of life should be followed in turn. What would happen to the sacrifices if there were no wealth? He must not speak so disparagingly of wealth. Let him give gifts and rule the earth righteously for the good of Brāhmins and cows and he would be rewarded in the end. Vyāsa followed on the same lines. It was the business of Brāhmins to indulge in penance, sacrifice, forgiveness, living in solitude and contentment. A fourth part only of a Brāhmin's virtue was expected from a Kshatriya and the life of a good householder was really the most difficult of all, especially for a king who had to bear the burden of his kingdom. Vyāsa urged him too not to indulge in useless grief. There was a mean in all things. It was only the fool who was ever really happy and content, the fool and the man with all his passions under control. But to be ever thinking about others' sorrows would rob him of happiness entirely. Let him remember that Time carried all men away. We met with one another, even our dearest like travellers meeting at an inn. There was nothing we could call our own. Our fathers were dead and we too would die. Death and Disease like a pair of wolves were ceaselessly devouring all. Destiny was a wonderful thing. The rich man died in his strength and youth, the poor man dragged on his miserable life for a hundred years. The rich had no appetite, while the poor were able to digest pieces of wood.

People asked if the Supreme Being was responsible or man. Some spoke of chance and others of destiny. If one man was visited by the sins due to another's action, then he should put all the responsibility on God. On the other hand, if a man was the real agent of all his acts good and evil, he did not think there was room for God at all, and what a man had done could bring no evil effects upon him. What happened, in his opinion happened because it was ordained

and from destiny no one could escape. Destiny on the other hand was the result of one's deeds in a former life, and for that no sin attached as far as this life was concerned. Man's acts, be they good or bad were revolving unceasingly as on a wheel, and the fruits of these acts man unceasingly reaped. The sum of the whole matter was to do his duty as a Kshatriya, and at the same time perform those acts of expiation and sacrifice, which would cleanse him of all his sins.

After some further talk on clean and unclean foods,¹ Vyāsa advised Yudhishthira to consult Bhīshma on the duties that pertained to kings. Krishna who was present approved of this advice and it is added that the king threw off his grief, and accompanied by Krishna the Pāndus rose from the river bank where they had been sitting and proceeded to Hastināpurā.

Yudhishthira assumes sovereignty. When the princes entered Hastināpurā, great crowds of citizens and villagers thronged the streets, which were perfumed with incense and adorned with flags and garlands. To his subjects who came with gifts and tribute he let be known that any disrespect shown to Dhritarāshtra the old king would be very displeasing to himself. He looked upon his uncle as the father and god of all of them. To the assembled Brāhmins he gave many rich presents, and received their blessings in return. Among the Brāhmins, and disguised as such, there stood a Rākshas, called Chārvāka, a friend of Duryodhana, who instead of blessing began to curse the Pāndus. The Brāhmins were very indignant, however, and all together pronounced against him the word Hun. He at once fell down, dead. After Shrāddha ceremonies in honour of their kinsmen, slain in battle, Yudhishthira addressed a hymn of praise to Krishna in which he declared him to be the creator and soul of the universe, the only refuge of men.

¹ There is a curious list given of sins that require expiation. They are all given together as if on the same level. The Brahmachāri who gets up after the sun rises, the man with a rotten nail or black teeth, the man who marries before his elder brother, the man who kills a Brāhmin, the man who speaks evil of others, etc.

The Pandus Visit Bhishma Not long after the Pāndu princes resolved to visit Bhishma. It will be remembered that he was left lying on the field of battle, waiting till the sun had entered the summer solstice, before he would choose to die. He was not alone however. The greatest of the Rishis as well as Parashu Rāma the Incarnation of Vishnu were keeping him company. The rishis included Marichi, Angiras Pulastya, Pulaha and Kratu who are said in the *Adi parva* to have been the mind born sons of Brahmā. Kashyapa the son of Marichi, Daksha, who sprang from the right toe of Brahmā and was the father in law of Shiva. Mārkaṇḍeya, who had witnessed many dissolutions of the universe as well as Brihaspati and Shukra the priests of the gods and demons. In their presence both before and after the arrival of the god, Bhishma sang the praises of Krishna, identifying him with Brahmā and Shiva.

When the princes and Krishna arrived and told the purpose of their visit, Bhishma asked to be excused on the double ground that he was exhausted with the pain of his wounds, and that there was no need for him to speak of the duties of kings when the Pāndus had Krishna to teach them. It is said however that Krishna entered the body of Bhishma, giving him the knowledge of the Past the Present and the Future, and at the same time eased him of all his bodily pain. He added that Bhishma had only fifty six days left to live and that when he died, knowledge of every kind would disappear from the world, and the earth would look like a moonless night.

Bhishma on the duties of Kings It is not possible to give anything but the briefest summary of the teaching which Bhishma imparted from day to day. On the first day he spoke of the duties of kings setting in the forefront the need of attending, with all respect to gods and Brahmins. The need of promptness and exertion was next emphasized. Exertion in particular was superior to destiny. Too great mildness on the part of a king led to disobedience. He should

also strive to conceal his own shortcomings, keep his own counsel, and watch for weakness in his foes. No Brahmin should ever receive corporal punishment. If they committed an offence, they could be banished. He must remember that Brahmins were gods on earth. Servants must not be allowed to be too familiar, and a king should never make jokes with them. If he did, they would become so shameless as to spit in his presence, and ride on horses as good as his. A king's first duty was to protect his subjects. He should pay his soldiers and others properly, see that the taxes were not collected in a cruel manner, and treat every one with even-handed justice. A king who was greedy and full of cunning, and who levied heavy taxes was soon deposed and slain. Where a good king ruled, men lived happily like sons in their father's house. If a king was all candour and simplicity, his enemies would quickly overcome him. On the other hand cunning alone did not pay. There should be a mixture of straight forwardness and guile.

The origin of Kingship. When the world was in its golden age men had no need of kings. There was no punishment, and no necessity to punish any one. But gradually evil spread over the earth, and in the end lust and covetousness and anger reigned supreme. In the confusion, the Vedas disappeared, and all religious rites ceased. When the gods invited Brahmā to take action, he produced a book containing 100,000 discourses, which dealt with the subjects of Religion, Profit and Pleasure. It treated of the doctrine of liberation as well. But it was also a handbook on Government, discussing revenue and agriculture, the behaviour of ministers and spies, the methods of punishment, how to attack and lay waste the country of an enemy, the treatment of forgers, thieves, hill tribes and fire raisers, the use of poison, incantations and illusions, and also the faults and vices of men. When Brahmā had prepared this large work and presented it to the gods, he said that the knowledge it contained would protect the world, if it

was remembered that the world could not be governed unless punishment was duly exercised. For that reason the book was called the science of punishment. The god Shiva was the first to read and make himself thoroughly acquainted with the book, but he found it too big, and brought out an abridgement, only one tenth of the original work and as the ages have passed it has been abridged several times since by the god Indra and others, till it now consists of only 1000 lessons. When Brahmā handed over his book to the gods Vishnu was invited to create a king of the world which he did. The eighth in succession from Vishnu was Prithu from whom the earth got her name of Prithivī while he was called Rajan (king) because the people were pleased with him. It was this Prithu who first levelled the earth which had formerly been very uneven. He was a great respecter of the Brahmins and because he healed their wounds he was the first to be styled a Kshatriya. Men obeyed kings because they looked upon them as divine, though they had the same kind of body and the same kind of understanding as ordinary men.

The duties of the four orders As this book also gave an account of the four primary castes Yudhis-thira asked Bhishma to tell them what were their respective duties. There are nine duties which are incumbent on all four: truthfulness, justice, forgiveness, refraining from anger, the begetting of children, purity of conduct, simplicity, the avoidance of strife and supporting those who depend on us.

As to Brahmins, in particular, their first duty was self control, and also the study of the Vedas, and the practice of austerities. A Kshatriya should give and never beg, protect his people, punish the wicked, and celebrate sacrifices. He should study the Vedas with the assistance of Brahmins.

A Vaishya was permitted to acquire wealth by honest methods, he should offer gifts, study the Vedas, and celebrate sacrifices. Trading with other people's money, he ought not to take more than a seventh part of the profit.

The duty of the Shudra was to serve the other three castes. It is not permitted to a Shudra to acquire wealth. That would mean he would obtain authority over the other castes. He might be allowed by the king to acquire wealth, if he spent it on religious observances. He was entitled to the cast-off shoes, clothes and umbrellas of his superiors. A Shudra may not use any of the Vedic mantras. He is permitted certain sacrifices of his own, he may not leave his master on any consideration, and all that he possesses is really his master's property.

The Brahmins must be acknowledged as the foremost of gods. Yet all the castes are holy, and are all linked together by the intermarriage which has produced the mixed castes.

The four modes of life are the *Banaprastha*, or hermit, the *Bhikshu* or mendicant, the *Grihastha* or house-holder, and the religious student or *Brahmachāri*. A man can only become a hermit after he has gone through a period as a religious student. When he goes to the forest, he may or may not take his wife. When there he should seek immersion in the eternal soul by giving up all thought of worldly affairs, and by the study of the forest books known as *Aranyakas*. The life of a householder, if worthily followed with truth, simplicity, hospitality, the offering of gifts to and the worship of the gods, is once more recognised as of high merit. These 'four modes of life' belong to the Brahmin alone, and the other castes should not adopt them.¹ A Brahmin who adopted the mode of life proper to a *Kshatriya* or *Vaishya* or *Shudra* would go to hell. Even though he recites the *Vedas* if he neglects his proper duties and becomes an evil liver, he is on the level of a *Shudra*. Giving gifts to such men has no religious value. The true Brahmin must be gentle and forgiving, without regard for either position or wealth.

How to consolidate a kingdom. The four modes of life which have been laid down for the

¹ For the three inferior castes, the life of the *Bhikshu* (mendicant) was permitted.

Brahmins do not need to be adopted by a king. He can acquire all the blessings which pertain to them however by the proper observances of his royal duties. When a king is virtuous, the gods themselves are afraid to disobey him, and he certainly deserves to be worshipped as it is on him the prosperity of the world depends. Without his protection trade and agriculture could not flourish, the evil would not be punished nor the study of the Vedas and asceticism possible. If a king rules badly, the Kali Yuga has come when he is wise and strong men live once more in the golden age. But a king must not forget that he cannot consolidate his kingdom, without the help of the Brahmins. They must be the first object of his regard. He may take possession of the wealth of all his subjects, but not that of Brahmins. He may tax all others, but not Brahmins. Every thing on earth belongs to the Brahmins, and when a king conquers any new territory, he should present it to Brahmins. By listening to their advice he acquires fame. It is ruin for a Kshatriya to quarrel with Brahmins. The Brahmin sprang from the mouth of Brahmā, the Kshatriya from his arms, the Vaishya from his thighs, the Shudra from his feet. The Brahmin is the foremost and the first born. There are thirty six virtues: justice, mercy, courage, and so on which a man must practice, but reverence for the Brahmin is the basis of everything else. A king obtains one fourth of the merit which his Brahmins and other subjects acquire. But he also suffers one fourth of the sins they commit. At the same time if a Brahmin neglects the study of the Vedas, engages in trade, and crosses the sea he has become a Chandāla and a king should take tribute from such and not spare him. Sometimes Brahmins are driven by poverty to become traders and farmers, but if a king is wise he will see to it that all Brahmins are duly supported, and saved from such degradation. For the Government of his kingdom he should appoint as ministers four Brahmins, eight Kshatriyas, twenty one Vaishyas and three Shudras. Having consulted

with them on any matters, he should let the people know what decision he has arrived at, but he must first of all submit the opinions of the ministers to his family priest, a Brahmin well versed in all matters connected with virtue, pleasure and profit, and act according to the priest's advice. Let a king remember that to trust nobody is one of the first rules of statecraft. Above all he should fear the members of his own family, as he fears death itself.

Village Government. Bhīshma also gave his views on local administration. There should be a head man for each village, with a superintendent responsible for ten villages, with another officer above every two superintendents responsible for twenty, above these again there should be officers in charge of one hundred and one thousand villages. The village head man is responsible for paying the tribute of the village he has been appointed to control, while the higher officers look after the roads, the state of trade, the punishment of thieves, and the taxes to be taken from all classes of workmen. Too severe taxation prevents the Vaishyas from increasing their wealth, and so decreases the power of the king. A prince must always milk his kingdom as a man milks his cow. If the calf is never allowed to get any of the milk, it will soon starve. Let the calf get a just share of the milk, and it will grow big and strong, able to bear heavy loads. He is a wise king who does not drain his kingdom too much. Drinking shops, courtezans, keepers of gambling houses, actors, and pimps should be kept under control, as they do harm to the better classes. Beggars, other than Brahmins, should be driven from the state. No fruit trees should be cut down. They belong to the Brahmins. This is one of the injunctions of religion. A king should do every thing he can to prevent any Brahmin from leaving his kingdom. He should go to him with love and respect and offer him at once the means of maintenance. Should a Brahmin say he is going elsewhere to secure sufficient

to afford him luxuries, the king should still ask him to stay, and supply him with these luxuries

The Rules of War It is a king's duty to discover the intentions and ambitions of other kings by means of spies. These spies should look like idiots and pass themselves off as deaf mutes. He should try to achieve his purpose without fighting. When he is certain that he is the stronger he may then strive to get possession of another's territories and wealth. When he invades the country of the enemy, he should tell the people that he is their king and that he will always protect them. If an enemy fights deceitfully, one is entitled to treat him in the same way. Fair fighting on both sides is what ought to be. Poisoned and barbed arrows are forbidden but it is legitimate to put poison in wells and tanks. Quarter should always be granted to a fallen foe. When a Brahmin tries to arrange terms of peace both sides should stop fighting at once. War is cruel and caused the deaths of many innocent persons but it also destroys many who deserve to be killed. When one is weeding a field he pulls up good plants as well as bad, but it is good for the field in the long run. When one fights for the sake of a Brahmin, he becomes a sacrifice incarnate. The Kshatriya who dies in battle goes to heaven, the coward goes to hell there is no doubt about that. That is what king Janaka told his soldiers before they began to fight. When a king has to fight against a stronger army, he should rush forward and shake hands with his men shouting the enemy is routed! the enemy is routed! He will encourage his followers by doing so. Brahmin should also recite incantations which are able to bring down destruction on one's foes. Secret agents should also be sent to create disunion in the ranks of the enemy. The old children and women should not be killed. It is unwise to use insulting language towards an enemy, or to indulge in useless acts of hostility. One should break but not destroy a foe. Such conduct is equivalent to persecution. When your enemy has been defeated, don't think that you can

sleep at ease. A wicked enemy bursts forth again like a fire

The Secret of Success in Life. The following classes of persons are successful in overcoming the difficulties of life, the twice born who follow the rule laid down by the Scriptures, who are free from deceit, malice and falsehood, who do not injure others, even when injured by them, who are not jealous of another's property, who treat their relatives properly, especially their parents, who do not sleep during the day, who read the Vedas at the proper hours, who seek no honour for themselves, though they give honour to others, who eat food merely to sustain life, who restrain their anger, who abstain from liquor, honey and meat, who bow to all the gods, listen to all the creeds, and possess faith, having their souls calm, who treat guests hospitably, who live with their wives for the sake of offspring only, who adore Nārāyana, the Supreme Lord of all creatures

The Story of the Jackal and the Tiger. When Yudhisthira asked Bhīshma how to recognise a man of really tranquil soul, he was told the story of a jackal, who in his former life had been a very wicked king. The jackal was so grieved to think of his former greatness and wickedness, that he would not eat meat even when it was offered to him by other jackals. He also began to indulge in various austerities, living on fruit and leaves, practising mercy and truth. This piety annoyed the other jackals, who lived at the same burning-ghāt as he did. They said he was very perverse in going against the laws of nature. He was born a jackal, and he should eat flesh as other jackals did. The pious jackal replied that he knew his birth and surroundings were low, but it was one's conduct that determined one's birth, and he was going to live in such a way as would make him famous. He did not approve of the life they led, the filling of their bellies was their one object in life. He proposed so to act that he would acquire great merit. This fine reply was overheard by a tiger, who was so delighted with it that he invited

the jackal to become his prime minister. The jackal declined the honour, saying that he was perfectly happy as he was, and quite unacquainted with the duties of a minister. He preferred living in the forest to living at court. In a king's palace one had often to listen to very nasty remarks about oneself. He would be sure to quarrel with the other ministers. He yielded however in the end on the condition that the tiger should always listen to his advice. When the jackal came to court, the other ministers were very angry and jealous. They had been in the habit of doing what they liked and the country suffered from many abuses. At first they tried to win him to their side by flattery and bribes. When they saw that the jackal was resolved to stand alone, they plotted his destruction. They accordingly got a piece of well dressed meat specially prepared for the royal tiger and concealed it in the jackal's house. When the pangs of hunger assailed the king, he called for his meat but it was nowhere to be found. At last the other ministers came and said they had found it in the house of the jackal famous for his wisdom, the jackal that never ate meat! The king became very angry as his ministers dwelt on the hypocrisy and vicious conduct of the jackal and gave orders that he was to be put to death. When the tiger's mother heard of the order she at once interposed, saying she was sure it was a false accusation and prompted by envy. The jackal had always borne a good character. It was easy to kiss but most unjust to do so till an enquiry had been made. The delay thus occasioned had fortunate results because it enabled one of the jackal's friends to come out from the ranks of his enemies and reveal the whole plot. When the tiger heard the truth, he took the jackal in his arms, and they embraced again and again. The jackal however declared that he could no longer hold the post of prime minister. The seeds of distrust had been sown, while the king's treatment of him had filled his heart with bitterness. He had been insulted and degraded. Though his voice was choked with tears as he said

this, he could not be persuaded by all the entreaties of the tiger, and accordingly retired to the forest. There by indulging in the practice of Prāya (starving) he got rid of his body and went to heaven.

The ministers a king should choose. There was a sage who lived in a forest inhabited by wild beasts. Though these animals were wild and fierce with others, they were mild and gentle to the sage, came to see him very regularly, and acted as if they were his disciples and slaves. Indeed there was one of them that would never leave his side, and that was a dog. One day when the dog was lying at the sage's feet, a great fierce leopard appeared, and the dog appealed to his master to protect him. The ascetic at once changed the dog into a leopard. Not long after a tiger appeared. When the dog now transformed into a leopard saw the tiger, he appealed once more to his master, and was changed into a tiger, and the visitor seeing one of his own species lying at the sage's feet, had no desire to injure him. But it must be noted that the dog no longer was content to eat fruits and roots. Like other tigers it ranged the forest in search of prey. But one day it saw a great aging elephant, and once more by the kindness of the sage the tiger was transformed into an elephant. Not long after the elephant met a lion, and it was changed into a lion, and at last to complete the changes, one day a great creature called a Sharabha, with eight legs and eight eyes, came right up to the sage's hermitage, and sought to destroy the lion. There was no help for it, and out of the love he bore his friend, the sage changed what had once been a dog, and was now a lion into a Sharabha, and a Sharabha so great and fierce that the other one ran away. Indeed all the beasts in the forest ran away, and the Sharabha did not know where to get flesh meat. In his hunger, and forgetting what the sage had done for him, this evil beast resolved to slay his benefactor. That holy man however by means of his ascetic powers, perceived the wicked thoughts that possessed the ungrateful creature, and at once changed

it back into its original form of a dog. At the same time he reminded it that it had never really belonged to any of the species into which it was changed. It was due to his kindness alone that it had risen to higher power and dignity. In the same way a king must be ware how he appointed his ministers. They should hold positions only for which they were competent. The king who kept low born persons about him could never be happy. A dog should not get a post for which a dog was not fit. Ministers ought to be men of high birth. The lion should do the work of a lion.¹

When Bhishma had concluded his discourse on the duties of kings Yudhishthira said it was manifest that Punishment was the foundation of all stable government. Bhishma agreed that that was so. Punishment was also called *Dharma* or Law, and was indeed a great god, no less than Vishnu himself. His wife was morality. It was through fear of punishment that men did not kill one another and in the form of a king kept watch over the world that it might not wander from the path of righteousness.

The Rishi who ate dog's flesh Yudhishthira asked Bhishma what a Brahmin ought to do to maintain life in times of calamity. Bhishma replied by telling of what happened to the Rishi Vishvamitra towards the end of the Treta and the commencement of the Dwapara age during a terrible drought which lasted for twelve years. Shops were closed, the fields lay empty, the country side was covered with heaps of bones of men and beasts, the temples were forsaken and even Brahmins died.² In the extremity of their hunger men began to eat human flesh. Vishvamitra suffered like others and abandoning his wife and child wandered everywhere in search of food. One day he entered a village inhabited

¹ Two other stories follow giving long conversations between a king and a pigeon and a cat and a mouse. The one teaches that you should never attempt to live in friendship with a person whom you have injured. The other is intended to prove that every kind of love and friendship is based on self interest. Even parents are moved by it.

From this we see that even before this present evil age (Kali Yuga) famines of great severity took place.

by Chandālas, and begged from door to door, but no one was able or willing to help him. In one house he chanced to see a piece of dog's flesh, and resolved that he would go at night when all were asleep and steal the flesh. It was permitted to steal when one was in so great calamity, and a man who is a Rishi cannot commit sin. He crept into the Chandāla's house when all, as he thought, were asleep, but the owner of the house at once demanded to know why he came. When he discovered who his visitor was, and why he came the Chandāla was greatly horrified to think that so holy a man was willing to break all the laws of the Vedas and of Aryan morality. But the rishi replied that when one's life is in peril there is no sin eating unclean food. It was not a great sin in any case to eat forbidden food, and it was only an oral precept that forbade men to drink intoxicants. He reminded the Chandāla that the rishi Agastya had once eaten the demon Vātāpi¹ when he was hungry, and he did not see why he should not be allowed to eat a dog. So, though the Chandāla protested, Vishvamitra took away the piece of dog's flesh, and ate it. It is added that he washed away all his sins by means of penance, whether this sin or others, is not said distinctly, but Bhīshma does say that a man should use all the means in his power, for the preservation of life. Yudhishthira was greatly shocked at this story. It seemed to him that such teaching swept away the foundations of all morality. Bhīshma was inviting him to do what truth and duty had always said must not be done. To this Bhīshma answered that he must look at things from a broader point of view. Kings especially should realize that they would never get through the world successfully if they guided their conduct by a one-sided morality. Righteousness sometimes had the appearance of unrighteousness. Evil sometimes seemed better than good. One had to take all the circumstances into consideration, and then calmly form one's opinion. 'You found that it was the people who broke the laws,'

¹ See page 76

who were the critics of scripture. It was the poor man that objected to the teaching of the law books regarding wealth. Some people say that all scripture is based on some reason, others say that even if you understood the teaching, you could not follow it. Others again say that 'morality is nothing else than the approved conduct of the world. Ushanas long ago told the Dutyas that the 'scriptures are not scriptures if they cannot stand the test of reason. Bhishma said, 'Look at me, I have killed men without number and sent them all to heaven. It is my business to seek the happiness of all creatures. But you must remember that not killing a man who ought to be killed is just as bad as killing another who should not be killed. This is the rule that kings like us should think of and if we do not think of it, it shows that we are not strong minded. This advice did not comfort Yudhishthira much and he asked if there was no rule of conduct, which remained steadfast and unchanged, one which men must never under any circumstances break. Yes, he was told there is one immutable law. He must always adore Brahmins! He must always treat Brahmins like gods! An angry Brahmin could do a man a great deal of harm. When they were pleased they were like nectar. When they were angry they were like poison.

The Fowler and the Pigeons To illustrate the duty of hospitality and helping suppliants Bhishma told the story of a wicked fowler who used to snare birds for a livelihood. One very cold stormy day he found a female pigeon lying half dead with cold on the ground. He picked the bird up and put it in a cage. As it was now evening he resolved to spend the night under the shelter of a great tree near at hand. As he approached the tree he joined his hands in prayer, asking that the spirits who dwelt in the tree might grant him shelter. It so happened that the home of the pigeon whom the fowler had captured was in that very tree, and her husband was lamenting the long absence of his wife as the fowler approached. He was

very loud in his praise of her many virtues. She never ate before he did, never sat down before he did, she was sad when he was sad, happy when he was happy. Without a wife, a palace changes to a forest. A wife is a man's richest treasure. She is the best of medicines in sickness and sorrow. There is no friend like a wife. There is no refuge like a wife, 'all the joy of life has gone, if my wife does not come back'. His wife shut up in the cage, at the foot of the tree was great uplifted by hearing these affectionate words, and she said to herself, that she was indeed a happy pigeon, when her husband used such language about her.¹ A husband indeed is a woman's greatest god. She then addressed her husband, and told him to offer hospitality to the hunter, even at the risk of his own life. To allow a suppliant to die, was as bad as killing a Brahmin or a cow. The male bird thereupon addressed the fowler in the language of very high morality. It was one's duty to help even an enemy, when he sought one's hospitality. The tree continued to give its protecting shadow to the man who was cutting it down. When the hunter said he was hungry and must have food, the bird expressed his regret that pigeons like him lived from day to day and never kept any food in store. But even as he uttered these words, the pigeon grew pale. He knew that there was one thing he could do, and that was to offer himself, to satisfy the fowler's hunger. And so preparing a fire, and walking round it three times he entered the flames. When he beheld this great act of self-sacrifice, the fowler was overwhelmed with sorrow and resolved to abandon his cruel trade of snaring and killing birds for ever. He accordingly threw away his nets and springs and cage, having liberated the female pigeon, and went off to live the life of an ascetic. The poor female pigeon thus left a widow, declared that life could not be endured without her husband. No chaste widow ventured to bear life's burden alone. Throwing aside all that she had, a woman should follow the dead. Having thus resolved,

¹ See also page 90,

she too entered the fire But in the hour of death she rejoined her husband He was seated in a heavenly car, and was surrounded by a great many exalted beings, who had like him done meritorious deeds when living on the earth Escorted by these noble spirits, husband and wife passed on to enjoy the bliss and happiness of heaven Not long after, the fowler got a glimpse of their heavenly glory and resolved to redouble his austerities, with the result that he too joined them This is a very ancient story The man who reads it every day is never overtaken by any evil, and goes himself to heaven, purged of distress and sin

The Origin of Sin When asked what was the source from which sin proceeds, Bhishma declared that covetousness is the cause of sin Like the ocean it could never be satisfied and it lasted as long as life itself Pride, anger, self conceit, gluttony, evil speaking and every kind of sin were due to covetousness Ignorance sprang from covetousness, and yet in many ways they were the same because it was ignorance that made men covet things they should not Envy, hate, love of the world, were due to ignorance, In opposition to all these evils and to overcome them, what a man needed was self control That was man's greatest need So all the Rishis have declared The man of self control was always cheerful and content Forgiveness, patience, truth, modesty, freedom from anger and malice, cleverness, impartiality, firmness these and other virtues all went to make self control It was true that the world thought the self controlled man a fool But self control meant that one conquered all things He who practiced that virtue did not need to live in the forest The place he lived in had become a forest, no matter where his home happened to be

Two verses may be added from the following chapter In praise of penance it is said that the penance of abstaining from food is of greater merit than truth, mercy, gifts and self control In praise of truth it is said, Truth is an eternal duty A thousand horse

sacrifices and Truth were once weighed against each other. It was found that Truth was the heavier.

Some moral aphorisms. At this stage in the book Bhīṣma gave a large amount of moral teaching. We select some of his utterances. Abstinence from injury to all creatures in thought, word and deed, with kindness and gifts (to Brahmins) are the permanent duties of the good. It is impossible to exhaust the merits of Truth. Indulgence strengthens lust. When a wise man resolutely turns away from it, it disappears and dies.

Envy is born of anger and covetousness. Mercy and knowledge of self, cause it to disappear. Good birth, learning and prosperity make men proud. When a man knows himself his pride disappears. Mercy arises when we see the miserable and helpless. The inalevolent man speaks evil of others and is himself judged. He looks at others with malicious eyes. He never gives others the credit they deserve. He finds pleasure in injuring others. He thinks everybody to be as bad as himself, and trusts nobody. He thinks the man who does him a kindness to be a fool. When a Kṣatriya wants something from you he is very polite. When he has got what he wants, he stops being courteous. A falsehood spoken in jest is not sinful, nor one that is spoken to a woman, nor on the occasion of a marriage, nor to benefit one's teacher, nor to save one's own life. It is not wrong to marry a woman of base birth. Women, jewels and water can never be unclean. Drinking liquor, killing a Brahmin, violating the bed of one's religious teacher, stealing gold and robbing a Brahmin are sins so heinous that they can never be expiated. By speaking against a Brahmin one sinks in disgrace for a hundred years. A man is not disgraced by killing an animal, unless it be a cow. Man has received lordship over the lower animals.

If a man wounds a Brahmin, he will have to live in hell for as many years, as there were grains of sand that soaked up his blood when it fell to the ground.

The punishment for the man who violates his teacher's bed is death, as a result of embracing a red hot iron figure of a woman. As an alternative he may be allowed to live if he performs a cow or a horse sacrifice. If a Brahmin smells liquor from another man's mouth, he must cleanse himself by drinking warm water, or warm milk for three days.

In a discussion as to which was most powerful Virtue, Profit or Desire, Vidura maintained that Virtue was greatest and men should seek Virtue first of all. Arjuna thought however that Profit should first be sought. Man was placed in this world to work, and it was the thought of obtaining wealth that made him work. When they had wealth even evil men could do virtuous deeds and satisfy their desires. Wealth was an excellent thing. Bhishma declared that in his opinion both virtue and wealth depended on Desire. Man acted from desire. Without desire a man sought neither wealth nor virtue. To these arguments Yudhishthira replied that all creatures were subject to birth and death. The only true man was he who cast aside the fetters of the world, who engaged himself in neither virtue nor sin, who paid no heed to Profit or Virtue or Desire. It was extinction which men should seek, and then he added, no one acts as he likes. The creator makes all men move as he wills. We do exactly what we are made to do.

The Origin of all things The Rishis declare that there is a primeval being called Mānasa¹. He is without beginning and without end. He does not know decay. He is unmanifest and unchangeable. It is by him that creatures are born, and die. He first created a divine being called Mahat. Mahat created consciousness. Consciousness created space. Water was born from space. From Water was born Fire and Wind. From the union of Fire and Wind was born the Earth. The primeval being then created a divine Lotus full of energy. From this lotus sprang

1 Mānasa is an adjective meaning belonging to the spirit or mind, what is mental or spiritual as opposed to corporal. Mahat means great but came to mean Intellect.

Brahma. Whenever he was born, Brahma uttered the words 'I am He'. For this reason he is called consciousness. All created things are his body. He is their Creator. The five elements, Space, Water, Fire, Wind, and Earth are this Brahma. The mountains are his bones, the earth is his flesh; the ocean is his blood, space is his stomach, the wind is his breath, fire is his energy; the rivers are his veins, sun and moon are his eyes. He is incapable of being known. He pervades the universe. He is infinite. He lives in consciousness, and the impure cannot know Him. When the great rishis wanted to know how the world arose they abstained from food for 1000 divine years¹. At the end of that time, they all got the same answer. The answer was that at first space alone existed. With neither sun nor moon nor wind space seemed to be asleep. Water then arose. It was like something darker than darkness. From the pressure of the water, wind arose. Owing to the friction of wind and water, fire was created. Fire and wind combined and when fire became a solid mass, it was known as earth. On the earth have been born, all sorts of creatures. In every creature there is a vital breath, called Prāna, which is indeed the universal self, the eternal being, the mind, intellect, and consciousness. When death comes, the body alone dissolves into its separate elements, but the Prāna, the living creature, never dies. Men speak as if the body felt pain and loss, but it is really the soul which feels. It is the soul that sustains the body, and tastes and touches and smells. We know this to be true because when separated from the soul, the body feels nothing at all. It is added the whole universe is made of water, and in it lives the eternal soul, who exists in all things. It is this soul that is the energy within everything that is. Foolish men say that the individual soul dies. It is not true. The individual soul only passes from body to body. By eating little food, by purging his heart of sin, by meditation, &

¹ A divine year is 360 years of men

man is able every day to get a vision of this (eternal) soul

Brahma created at first a few Brahmins who are known as Prajāpatīs or lords of creation¹. They are as luminous as the sun. Thereafter Truth, Duty, Penance, the eternal Vedas, all sorts of good deeds and Purity were created. After them there came into existence the gods, the Dānavas, Gandharvas, Daityas, Asuras, the great snakes, Yakshas, Rākshasas, men in their four castes, and all sorts of animals. It is stated later on that at first Brahmins only were created, but that when the Brahmins gave way to anger and pleasure they became Kshatriyas, when they took to trade they became Vaishyas, when they yielded to great falsehood and impure behaviour they became Shudras. If a Brahmin however neglects the duties of a Brahmin he is not really a Brahmin, while a pious Shudra who abstains from impure food and deeds is not really a Shudra.

The doctrine of salvation As the book proceeds increasing doubt is cast on the benefit of sacrifices and rites. Bhishma tells of a father laying down for his son the four modes of life which had always been prescribed in the past: (1) living a life of celibacy and reading the Vedas, (2) a wish for children to save one's departed ancestors, (3) celebrating the sacrifices according to proper rites, (4) entering the woods and giving one's self up to meditation. The son asks how he can please God by animal sacrifices which involve cruelty, or by the ill treatment of his own body. He thinks it better to bring the body under control, to crush desire, to injure no one, to practise truth. By study of the Vedānta by the use of Yoga meditation, by reciting the mystic letters OM, he will acquire Brahma. There is no penance like truth, no sorrow like attachment to the world, no happiness except Renunciation. One does not need a son to save him or his forefathers. The object is to do away with all distinction between the external and the internal, to

¹ See Note 3. Prajāpatīs and Rishis

concentrate the mind upon itself, and then on Brahma alone. That however is only a stage to the ideal condition, when the Yogin thinks on nothing at all. The man who succeeds goes to the heaven of Supreme Self. Compared with this heaven, the other heavens are little better than hells.

It is only when we have become entirely freed from all earthly objects and desires, that we are able to attain absorption in Brahma who has neither beginning nor end, and is destitute of all qualities. On the other hand we have a passage which declares that the god Vishnu is this Supreme Brahma, and men are urged to see refuge in him, who was successively manifest in various incarnations, and especially as Krishna. It is recognized however that even the gods find it difficult to acquire absorption in Brahma, and probably it is here that we find the explanation of the contradictory teaching that while acts 'are good' abstention from acts is better. Yudhisthira cross-examined Bhīshma on this very point. He said why do the Vedas give such contradictory teaching? They tell us to *act* and to refrain from *acting*. This question made Bhīshma angry. He declared it was the language of an atheist. Nevertheless in his reply, he really acknowledged the correctness of Yudhisthira's criticism. He declared that the duties and sacrifices performed by the horse-holder were very meritorious. The life of the forest dweller with ascetic rites like that of sitting between the five fires at midday in the hot weather was still more meritorious. But the life of the Sanyāsi, the man who seeks renunciation, desiring neither earth, nor hell nor heaven is the only life that achieves true liberation. Along this path even a low caste or a woman may travel, and secure salvation in the end. For that reason preachers of Yoga refrained from all acts, even the Vedas they did not require. Acts meant re-birth, and from re-birth a wise man sought to be free. It is wrong to think that liberation is the same as annihilation, as some people suppose. It is the consummation not the extinction of life. Just as smaller

rivers fall into larger rivers and lose their old forms and names, just as these larger rivers again fall into the ocean, and lose their separate existence in the sea in the same way takes place that 'form of extinction' which is called liberation' when the individual soul is lost in Brahma

The infinite variety of the Mahābhārata is illustrated once more by the fact, that in reply to a question, Yudhishthira is told of a shop keeper who discoursed to an ascetic on the ancient morality which everybody knows, and which is friendliness and kindness to man and beast. The shop keeper said his scales were just, he treated everybody equally he hated nobody, he neither praised nor blamed anybody, he desired nothing. He followed the example of good men before him who with their sons and grandsons, observed the rules laid down in scripture. That kind of life brought prosperity and heaven. It made it possible for a man to attain to Brahma. The shop keeper still further elaborates his teaching as to the blessedness of harmlessness. He not only condemns the killing of animals but disapproves of agriculture because the plough gives pain to the earth. Sacrifices he held had been instituted by greedy priests. The true sacrifice was the sacrifice performed by the mind, and if they had sacrifices at all, people should use herbs and fruits and balls of rice, nor did he believe in pilgrimages. The soul was the most sacred place of all. Not long after both the ascetic and shop keeper died and went to heaven arriving at the places there which each had acquired in virtue of his particular deeds. It should be noted that when the shop keeper denounced the killing of animals and agriculture, the ascetic told

1 There are the words of the book c 219

The Sankhya system of philosophy is also described by Vyasa in this book. It teaches he says that one should keep apart from all objects of the senses and he adds I have thus described to you those topics namely liberation according to the Sankhya system and that according to the Yoga system which are dissimilar if the speaker be disposed to treat them as such. Throughout the poem Vyasa plays many parts and is made the vehicle of many diverse views on life and conduct.

him that he was an atheist. Human beings could not live without animals, crops and herbs, and sacrifices required both animals and food. The world would come to an end if sacrifices ceased.

The sin of sacrificing animals. Bhīshma then adds a story of a king who was greatly shocked at seeing the mangled body of a bull, and hearing the bellowing of the victims at a cow sacrifice. The king declared that it was only ignorant men and atheists, or those who wanted to acquire fame by means of rites and sacrifices, who spoke in favour of sacrificing animals. The supreme God is best pleased with the offering of fruits and flowers. It is only base men who are possessed by the desire to acquire merit and Manu says that, that is the only reason why people kill animals in sacrifice. Bhīshma also told of king Nahusha once giving orders to have a cow killed in honour of his guest the god Tashtri. This was an act of hospitality in accordance with the true, ancient, and eternal injunction of the Vedas. Kapila¹ the sage however happened to be present, and fearless and firm as he always was, he cried out in indignation, Oh ye Vedas! Thereupon a rishi entered the cow, and addressing the sage, ordered him to be silent, and not to speak evil of the Vedas, which were the very words of God himself. This retort led to a long discussion, in which Kapila said he had no wish to speak lightly of the Vedas. They prescribed rules anent the performing of acts, which led to heaven and conferred other blessings. But while they told us to perform acts, they also told us not to perform acts. He admitted it was difficult to form an opinion on such diverse teaching. But his view was that if refraining from acts produced merit, then their performance must be an evil. The object of gifts and sacrifices was to gain purity of heart, and he failed to see how a sacrifice whose fruits were at best limited in time and extent, could secure the highest end. Self-control and tranquillity alone can achieve attainment to Brahma. On

¹ Kapila was the founder of the Sāṅkhya Philosophy. He destroyed the 60,000 sons of Sagara with his frown.

the other hand the inspired cow declares that the new idea of obtaining incorporeal absorption in Brahma, what they call Emaneipation, is destructive of the real teaching of the Vedas, and is the work of clever men who have failed in life, and are the victims of their own laziness. The man who practices rites and sacrifices cannot be overcome by sin. The animals that he kills share in his blessedness. The cow is quite certain that the man who neglects the Vedas can never attain to Brahma. Kapila closes the discussion by admitting that the householder often obtains every sort of excellence, but he cannot enjoy the supreme bliss of renunciation. Acts no doubt purify the body, but knowledge is the highest end¹. It is possibly a concession to the orthodox, which makes him add 'One who is master of the Vedas, knows everything for every thing is established in the Vedas. The present the past, and the future all exist in the Vedas. This is the one conclusion of all the scriptures, that this universe exists and does not exist'. He cannot avoid the jibe however that the man who is not thoroughly acquainted with the Vedas is only a bag of wind.

The fear of Life and Death The contrast between the old and the new ideas is well illustrated by a discussion that took place between a father and his son. The son was acquainted with the doctrine of Liberation. The father stood in the old ways. When the father accordingly was asked by his son, what a man should do to acquire virtue, he told him to follow the four modes of life, live the life of a religious student, marry and have children thus rescuing his ancestors from

¹ Kapila appears in this tale as a teacher of unorthodox non injury and maintains to the end (so that his view is presented as really correct) that not the sacrifice of animals but the sacrifice (worship) of knowledge is the best. Elsewhere also we find the same antithesis between the old orthodoxy and the new science of thought which not only disregards Vedic ceremonies but condemns them. (Hopkins *The Great Epic of India* p. 99). The god Dharma is reported as saying 'Abstention from injury is the religion which is perfect about its rewards. The religion of cruelty is only so far beneficial that it leads to heaven' (Bk. 12 c. 27). It will be remembered that to the disciple of Yoga the ordinary heaven is little better than hell. It is at best a temporary state of happiness and does not save from re birth.

hell, perform the sacrifices that are appointed and finally retire to the forest, and end his days as a hermit. The son expressed his surprise that his father should speak so calmly, when he knew that the world was attacked on all sides by irresistible foes. To this the father replied, What foes? He had never heard of them at all. And then the son began to dwell on the universality of Disease, Old Age, and Death, death that comes to all, the wise and the ignorant, the weak and the strong, the happy and the sad, comes too when they expect him not, breaking in upon their schemes and hopes and joys, like a tiger carrying away a sleeping deer. Death does not wait to see if a man has or has not acquired *deeds*. It comes when it likes, and carries all away. The son could not understand how his father could sit so calmly and at ease. There was only one thing that was able to conquer Death, and that was Truth. Immortality dwelt in Truth. With Truth as his possession he would escape from Death, and become like one of the immortals. Controlling his senses, and refraining from injury to all creatures, in thought, word and deed, he would perform the sacrifice of Peace. It was not possible for him to join in an animal sacrifice which was full of cruelty. It was a sacrifice too that only produced uncertain rewards. Nor did he need children to rescue him from hell. He would celebrate the sacrifice of self. He was sorry that his father thought a Brahmin needed friends and wealth, wives and children. Let him seek for his own self which was hidden in a cave. The river of life is full of dread and the soul has to pass endless ages of time, before it can hope to be free. As a goldsmith purifies gold of its dross, so has the individual soul to purify itself by means of countless rebirths. Think of thousands of lakes, and of immense size. Think of a man trying to dry them up by taking out each day as much water as would cling to a single hair, and you will realise the length of time required by one created soul to pass from the time of its creation to the time it ceases to exist. The souls of men are of six colours,

Dark, Tawny, Blue, Red, Yellow and White Their colour depends on the extent to which the three qualities Rajas, Tamas and Sattwa (passion or activity, darkness or ignorance and goodness or purity) prevail During his many stages of existence a man may have to suffer in hell for many thousands of Kalpas,¹ or should his soul become yellow he goes to the upper world, and lives as a god But until he becomes emancipated, his heaven is just a sort of hell Because in heaven even no one can live for ever The time comes when he has to go back to earth as a man He may return to heaven a second time on the other hand his soul may become dark in colour, and he will go down to hell At the time of the universal dissolution of the universe, the man who has been able by Yoga discipline, to destroy his gross body enters Brahma Others, be they gods or men, with an unspent capital of merit at their credit take the position in the new Kalpa they enjoyed in the previous one The gods who have nothing to their credit at the time of the dissolution must descend to earth, and be born as men It is only when a man's soul becomes white that he goes and does not return

The origin of Fever The very next chapter takes us back to another world Yudhishthira asked Bhishma about Vritra the great and virtuous demon, the lover of Vishnu, who was 3500 miles high, who fought against all the gods together and who was with difficulty overcome Vritra had practised Yoga for 60 000 years, and was so powerful in virtue of that, that if he had not been plagued by fever at the instigation of the gods, they would never have prevailed In his exhaustion from the fever, Vritra happened to yawn, and that gave Shiva the opportunity of driving a thunderbolt down his throat

Naturally Yudhishthira asked how Fever arose and he was told the following story, told with great variations in two succeeding chapters When Dal sha was

¹ Kalpa see Note 3 8640 millions of years make one kalpa

holding his famous sacrifice¹ to which all the gods were invited except his own son-in-law, Shiva, Umā expressed her great indignation that her father should thus have slighted them both. Shiva sought to appease his angry spouse by saying it was an old arrangement with the gods, that he got no share in any of the sacrifices. This explanation did not at all please Umā, and she said she failed to see why the biggest god of all should be treated in such a manner. She was so overwhelmed with grief, that she refused to speak to her husband again. Thus roused and summoning all his Yoga powers, Shiva hastened to the scene of sacrifice. Assisted by his goblin followers, he extinguished the fires with blood, pulled up the stakes, and seized the celestial ladies, discourteously pushing them about. Countless bottles were broken and rivers of milk and treacle began to flow. Mountains of meat and dishes of every kind were scattered far and wide. The sacrifice itself in the form of a deer took refuge in flight. When Shiva saw it flee, he became so angry that a drop of sweat fell from his brow. When the drop of sweat touched the ground, it caused a great fire, and from the fire, a terrible creature was born, with blood-red eyes and a green beard. This creature at once consumed the fugitive sacrifice. To appease the angry god the others saw that they must offer Shiva from that day forth a share in every sacrifice. They did so, on the condition that he recalled the mighty creature that his wrath had produced. It was finally agreed that it should be divided into many parts, and under the name of Fever live among men. If you read this story with undivided attention, you will get freedom from Fever and always live happily. The second version of this story, tells that the rishi Dadhīcha asked why Shiva had not been invited. It could not be a real sacrifice if Shiva (Rudra) was not present. Daksha replied that there were eleven Rudras in all, and he knew every one of them, but he did not know who this great god Maheshwar was, that Dadhīcha was.

¹ See page 140

talking about. He was offering a sacrifice to Vishnu the master of all the gods, without a peer. Dadhicha's view however was that they would suffer some great calamity and that their sacrifice would be destroyed, if they worshipped one who ought not to be worshipped and refused to worship him who ought to be adored.¹ It should be added that when Shiva did arrive and caused the destruction of the sacrifice Daksha remembered who his son-in-law was and humbly sought forgiveness and a boon. He then proceeded to repeat the 1008 names of Shiva. The god was highly pleased with this adoration declaring that it was equal to a 1000 Horse sacrifices and said that from henceforth Daksha would be the foremost of all living creatures. Best of all he imparted to Daksha a creed which the gods and demons (Dānvas) had elaborated from the Vedas, and from the philosophers of Sāṅkhya and Yoga. These supernatural creatures had long used it, in the practice of their austerities. It was the true means of liberation. It was full of mystery, and for that reason stupid people criticised it. It was a creed opposed to the duties laid down for the four castes and the four modes of life with which it had very little in common. Shiva added that it was really himself who had in ancient days discovered this religion to which he gave the name of Pāshupati. There is no indication that Shiva expounded this religion of the gods to Daksha. Indeed it is said that he at once disappeared from view. *Bhishma in concluding the story tells us that if we recite this hymn that recounts the names of Shiva we shall never experience the slightest evil all through life. We shall be healed of our diseases and pains, no ghost or demon shall disturb our dwelling, we shall obtain the fulfilment of all our desires and when we die we shall go to heaven, never to be born again among animals or birds.*

¹ Note how Dadhicha and Daksha respectively deny divinity to Vishnu and Shiva.

² This story should be read with care. It is a strange combination of the higher and the lower, the old and the new ideas that were working in Hinduism.

Sankhya and Yoga.¹ When Yudhishthira asked Bhīshma to explain the difference between the Sāṅkhya and Yoga systems of philosophy he was told that the followers of each praised his own system, though the Yogins put forward very good reasons for showing that one who did not believe in the existence of God could not achieve liberation. For himself Bhīshma thought there were good men among the followers of both systems. He approved of both. They both urged kindness to all creatures, purity and the observance of vows, though their authoritative scriptures were not the same. Yudhishthira was welcome to choose either. The path of Yoga is contemplation. It involves concentration of mind and the suppression of the vital airs. By means of this, and by assuming particular postures, by fixing one's gaze until one is as immovable as a mountain, with the power to see, hear, taste, smell, and touch all gone, a wise man reaches the condition of Yoga. The Yogin is able to do any thing he likes, none of the Rishis or the gods, not death itself can do any thing against him. He indeed becomes able to create thousands of bodies, and moves at will in earth and sky, enjoying all kinds of pleasure. Special diet is also required by one who would practice Yoga. The path he has to travel is very difficult indeed. But when he has achieved his purpose, he can enter into, and come out of Brahma himself. The great Nārāyaṇa has become his soul.

The Sāṅkhya system on the other hand, is achieved by means of knowledge. It was founded by Kapila, and knows both what is good and bad in gods and rishis and men. It knows too the excellences and the faults of the Vedas, and of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga philosophies. It is acquainted with the three qualities of Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas, and the twenty-five principles or topics. It beholds the destruction of men, and their desire to be free. Beholding and knowing these things it declares Nature to be the cause of the universe. It is Nature that causes the presiding

¹ See Note 17. Sāṅkhya and Yoga.

soul to assume diversity and to return to unity. Man's soul has been blinded by nature, and through nature overwhelmed by the qualities of Rajas and Tamās (Darkness and Ignorance). His condition is one of great misery, having to endure millions of births. Men seek to cross this ocean of misery by studying the Vedās by penance and sacrifices but knowledge alone is the secret of success. There is no knowledge equal to the Sīṅkhyā, no power equal to that of Yoga. He who sees both to be identical is acquainted with the laws that rule the universe.

The power of Yoga We are told a long story of Sukha, a son of Vyāsa. Sukha at first was disposed to a life of pleasure. But his father bade him not to think that he would first enjoy himself and after that, try to acquire liberation. Death might come to him before he had been satiated with the world. The wise man never put off till to-morrow. He sought the wealth which neither kings nor thieves could take away. As a result of his father's appeals, Sukha betook himself to Yoga with the result that he was able to fly through the air at will and could resist the blandishments of evil women. In the end he stripped himself free of all faults and desires. None of the three qualities, goodness, passion and ignorance could touch him. As he once journeyed through the sky, he smote two great mountains 700 miles high and rent their summits asunder. He was able to make himself one with Wind and Air and Fire. When he saw his soul thus freed from all attachments, he laughed with joy. In the end, he resolved to journey towards the north, and be absorbed in Brahmā. As he passed the gods showered down flowers, the Rishis and Gandharvas came out to see him, and began to cheer. When his father Vyāsa saw him go, he raised a loud lament that filled the three worlds, but Sukha would not stay. He had entered all things, he had become all things and in reply to his father's cry, he uttered the word Bho.

Narada's visit to the White Island In response to Yudhishthira's questions as to what god he ought

to worship, who was the god of gods, and who was superior to the god of gods, Bhīshma told him a story that he had heard about the Rīshī Nārāda. In the golden age, the Eternal Nārāyaṇa was born as the son of Dharma and had taken four forms, as Nara Nārāyaṇa,¹ Hari and Krishna, the self-created. The two former practised long austerities on the Himalayas, and while there, were visited by Nārada, who asked them whom they were worshipping. He could not understand why these two original gods should be worshipping other deities. They told him that they worshipped the all-pervading Soul. The bodiless inhabitants of heaven did the same, but it was possible to know him by knowledge alone. Hearing these words, Nārada resolved that he must behold the Supreme Soul. He accordingly set off, flying through the air, in a north-westerly direction, till he came to the White Island in the Sea of Milk. The people of that island eat no food. They have eyes that never wink, and they are white in complexion. They are entirely sinless, and evil men become blind when they see them. It would seem that in a former age, three sons of Prajāpati, Ekata, Dwita and Trita, had gone to that island, but they had failed to see Nārāyaṇa himself, though their hearts were full of him. They found that the people indeed worshipped only one God. With hands joined in prayer they engaged in silent devotion. As they prayed a great light burst forth, and when they saw it, they all rushed forward, full of joy, and in the attitude of worship, crying out Hail! Hail! O thou Creator of the World. But the three rishis, amazed by the power of the God's illusion, were not able to see Him. They heard a voice, however, which told them that no one could see the God without devotion (faith).

When Nārada reached the island, he saw the white men even as the other three rishis had seen them, devoted to the worship of one God. Nārada

¹ It will be remembered that Arjuna and Krishna are elsewhere said to be Nara and Nārāyaṇa.

however resolved to give himself up to Yoga, and the repetition of Mantras. He also uttered a hymn of praise, in which he declared that the God was devoid of all attributes and free from all sets. He said he was the same as the four-headed Brahmā and Dakṣa. He was the sun, the Sāṅkha Yoga, the embodiment of the Upanishads, Yama and death and desire, as well as freedom from desire, the monkey that carried Rāma, the great horse sacrifice and Vāsudeva (Kṛishna) with many other titles and names. In response to this prayer the divine Nārāyaṇa with the universe for his form, appeared to Nārada. He was like the feathers of a peacock, a burning fire, pure gold and crystal. He had a thousand stomachs and a thousand arms. He uttered from his many mouths the sacred letters OM, the Gayatri¹ and other mantras from the Vedas. In a long discourse the god told Nārada who and what he was. I am He who cannot be seen or touched, the soul of the entire universe. He who is known by the name of Vāsudeva (Kṛishna) who is never affected by good or bad deeds. They who are devoted to me enter into me and become liberated. I am known as Puruṣa, without act. I am the twenty-fifth. What you see of me is merely an illusion. I am cause. I am effect. Brahmā is engaged in looking after many of my works. Rudra (Śiva) emanated from my forehead. There are eleven Rudras coming out of my right side, with the twelve Adityas on my left. The goddess Sarasvatī, the mother of the Vedas as well as the three qualities live in me. The god then proceeded to tell Nārada of the various incarnations he would assume for the good of the world, viz. the boar, the man lion, Parashu Rāma, Rāma, Kṛishna, the tortoise, the fish and Kalki. He added that many of his best incarnations had already taken place and assured Nārada that Brahmā the creator, had never been privileged to see him as Nārada had been. The god then disappeared.

¹ The Gayatri is the verse in the Vedas which every Brahmin is supposed to repeat every morning and evening. It is addressed to the sun as Savitri.

² See Note 17.

This wonderful story is equal to the four Vedas and the Sāṅkhya Yoga. It is called the Pāṅcharātra Scriptures. We have it word for word as Nārāyaṇa told it to Nārada. If you read it you will get to the White Island, and attain absorption in Nārāyaṇa.¹

The gods and liberation. At this stage the question was asked why don't the gods adopt the doctrine of liberation. They rejoice instead in the sacrifices that men offer them, and do not seek to be freed from the fetters of existence. It would seem that after the creation, the gods all went to the sea of milk, to ask Nārāyaṇa (he is here called Aniruddha) what their respective duties and functions were to be. They engaged in penances for 1000 divine years. At the end of that time Nārāyaṇa appeared and told them that he would increase their vigour and inclination for work. It would be their business to uphold and rule the world, as well as to receive sacrifices. The gods were so pleased that the hairs on their bodies stood on end.

With regard to the rishis, some were to take part in and profit from the religion of rites and acts. These were the seven rishis with whom we are already acquainted. Others including Kapila and Sanat Kumāra were to devote themselves to the religion of renunciation. As for Nārāyaṇa himself, after the other gods had gone away, he appeared before Brahmā carrying an earthen vessel, and a three-forked stick, and declared that he was going to adopt the religion of renunciation. It is said that he told the others to follow acts, for the sake of giving some variety to the world.²

¹ It will be noticed that the Supreme Soul is here thoroughly identified with Vishnu, and with Vishnu as he is known in his incarnations.

² At this point in reply to a question of Arjuna the Holy one (Vishnu) tells a long mythological tale, which describes the cursing of an unborn babe, for resisting the lascivious approaches of his uncle, explains how Indra got his green beard for his criminal connection with Ahalya, as well as other punishments not fit to mention, why the sea is salt, why there is the mark of a hare on the moon, and finally relates Vishnu's own quarrel with Shiva, when he seized him by the throat, with the result that it has had a blue mark on it ever since. When this fight took place, the other gods got greatly alarmed, and Brahmā fell off his chair.

Devotion greater than knowledge As the Book of Consolation approaches its close King Juna mejaya, the performer of the great snake sacrifice at which Mahābhārata was recited, states his opinion that the religion of devotion is greater than that of knowledge. By means of devotion one could attain to Nīrāyana right away. Nor did it require the study of Vedas and Upanishads. He wanted to know who had first discovered the religion of Devotion. The ling was reminded that before the battle between the Kurus and Pāndus the Holy One had explained this religion to Arjuna, in the Bhagavadgītā¹. It was to be admitted that in many respects it was a religion difficult to understand. It had been given to the world time after time and time after time it had disappeared². It had indeed been sent down after the successive births of Brahmā, in the seven different cycles when Brahmā was born from the mind the eyes, the speech the ears, and the nose of Hari Nārīyana from an egg, and from within a lotus. The seventh birth of Brahmā from within a lotus, which sprang from the navel of Nīrāyana is the cycle in which we live. It will thus be seen that the religion of devotion, devotion to Hari Nārāyana (Vishnu) is the primeval and eternal religion and it now prevails throughout the world. It is difficult to understand and difficult to practice except by those whose souls are pervaded by the quality of goodness. This discourse about the religion of devotion is not however followed out, and the Book of Consolation ends with an account of how Shiva one day in his travels saw Brahmā engaged in meditation. After enquiring for one another's health and their mutual hope that all was well with the world, and their penances and studies of the Vedas, Shiva asked Brahmā why he had left his happy home to sit and meditate on a mountain top.

¹ See page 119

² It is said that on one occasion two demons stole the four Vedas from Brahmā thus plunging the world in darkness. They were recovered from hell where the demons took them by Hari who had assumed the disguise of a horse's head.

When Brahmā replied that he was meditating on the one universal Soul, Shiva said he had thought that the infinite soul of which he spoke was one and single, and he would like to know who was this universal soul. Brahmā said that the matter was very much beyond him, but he would try to explain it to the best of his ability, as it was expounded in the Sāṅkhya system and the Yoga philosophy. In Brahmā's opinion there were many souls, but the one Soul on whom he was meditating, transcended them all. The one Soul was the source from which the countless other souls had come. It was the business of these souls to rid themselves of all qualities and attributes, and to be absorbed in the Supreme Soul. This supreme soul lives in all, and yet is not affected by the acts of those in whom it lives. He dwells in all, and witnesses everything they do. He is Nārāyaṇa, the one spirit, the universal soul. Indeed one ought to say that there is but one soul, because he is the knower and the known, the thinker and the thing thought, the eater and the food that is eaten. He is nature (Pradhāna) that lasts for ever, and without change.

XIII

The Book of Precepts

'ANUSHASANA PARVA' is of the same length as the Forest Book. Its teaching and general tone are greatly inferior to that of the Book of Consolation though as its name implies, it is of the same order. It too is full of many tales and legends. The closing chapter tells of Bhishma's death.

Yudhisthira still needs comfort Despite the many discourses he had listened to Yudhisthira declared that he was unable to acquire peace of mind. The wicked Duryodhana had died on the field of battle, and gone to heaven. He and his brothers were still alive and called on to endure the burden of remorse. It seemed to him that God had created them for this purpose that they might do evil and he demanded to know how they could be purged of their sins. In reply Bhishma told him a story about a boy who had been bitten by a serpent and died. When a fowler wished to kill the serpent the boy's mother protested, saying that the serpent was not to blame. The boy's death was ordained, and the serpent merely performed the duty to which it had been appointed. Indeed the serpent itself explained that Death had ordered it to kill the child. When Death was asked why she had given such an order she explained that she had been moved by Time to do so. When Time was appealed to, it answered that neither death nor the serpent nor itself was guilty. They were nothing more than the immediate causes. Behind them stood the child's own *Karma*. He was experiencing the fruits of his own past deeds. If there was any sin in the matter and that was questionable, one had to look for it, in the sum total of all the separate operating causes put together.

In this connection should be read a question put to Bhīshma in a later chapter, as to whether the Karmā that any one acquires in this life, or the Kārma acquired in past lives is the greater, that is, whether Exertion or Destiny is the more powerful influence. It is said that the god Brahmā himself declared that just as soil, however well tilled, yielded no fruit unless seed was sown, so in the same way, a man's destiny could not help him, unless he was willing to exert himself. His deeds are the soil, and destiny is the seed. It is the combination of soil and seed that yields a harvest. The gods themselves were what they were, because they had made an effort. The industrious man prospered. The lazy came to grief. An unfavourable destiny was not so great an evil as a man's own sloth. Destiny alone could do nothing for him. A man is his own best friend, and his own worst enemy. Destiny can not harm the righteous man. It is to be remembered however that the gods sometimes try to defeat men's efforts out of jealousy and fear.

Wrong to teach low-caste people. Bhīshma then discoursed on the greatness of Brāhmins. For himself he said it had always been his greatest joy to serve Brāhmins. Just as a woman looked up to her husband as a god, so should Kshatriyas look up to and reverence Brāhmins. Had he been born an ignorant common Brāhmin, Bhīshma would have thought it a great honour. It was a dangerous thing not to reverence them. He had heard of a man who was changed into a monkey for showing them disrespect. To refuse to give them gifts had very serious consequences. The Brāhmins themselves had always assured him of this. There was no doubt about it. However young or poor a Brāhmin might be, he should always be treated with honour. Brāhmins however themselves incurred one great danger. If they did not avoid it, they would fall into great distress. They should never teach low caste people. It was a great sin to do so. Even in teaching people of the higher castes, they should be very careful. The taking of money for instruction given was always

wrong, while morality was so subtle, that the mis understanding of what was taught might lead a disciple to do the wrong thing. When an instructed person committed a sin as a result of what he had been told, the sin lay on his teacher. For that very reason some Brāhmīns took a vow of silence, and refused to teach at all.

The names of Shiva There then follows many pages devoted to the glory of Shiva. Krishna is the chief speaker. When asked about that great god, Krishna says that the gods including Indra and the grandsire find Shiva beyond their comprehension and asks how one who is an ordinary person can understand who and what he is. In the place where Shiva dwells, the mongoose and the snake, the deer and the tiger play together. There too are rishis who eat and drink like cows, having given up the use of their hands while others find their only nourishment in the rays of the moon. Shiva is revealed also in a new aspect as a granter of boons. For example one demon was granted the power of all the gods and enjoyed it for ten millions of years. Another who poured the flesh of his own body into sacrificial fires in honour of Shiva was given the power of creating all kinds of animals. It was by using a weapon of Shiva's that Parashurāma had killed the Kshatriyas. It was Shiva and Shiva alone whom the gods worshipped. It was from Shiva that all men had originated just as all women had sprung from Umā who is Shiva's wife. We have proof of that truth in the fact that men and women respectively bear on their bodies the distinguishing marks of these two deities. It was a description of Shiva's greatness and glory that he heard from the ascetic Upamanya that made Krishna resolve to secure a sight of Shiva. He accordingly was initiated in the necessary rites. Got shaved and put on rags. Had his body rubbed with butter. Put a cord of munja grass round his loins. Held kusha grass in one hand and a staff in the other. Lived on fruits for a month on water for a month and then for three months on air only. Stood on one foot

with upraised hands and never slept, all these five months. The result was that at the end of that time he got a vision of both Shiva and his wife. They were attended by gods and demigods, as well as their own goblin followers. The deity himself was seated on his bull. His sacred thread consisted of a snake. He was clothed with a tiger skin. Despite the fact that he had worshipped Shiva thousands of times, and that there was no one so dear to Shiva as Krishna, Krishna was not able to look at Shiva. He received however no less than eight boons, the chief of which was that he should possess sixteen thousand wives.

Krishna then repeated, for the benefit of the Pāndus, the thousand names of Shiva as he had heard them from the lips of the ascetic and originally uttered by Brahmā. They really number ten thousand, but unfortunately only one thousand are known among men. The lesser number, however, is able to remove every kind of sin, no matter how heinous. The followers of the Sāṅkhya and Yoga are well aware of the fact that it is by knowing Shiva that they really obtain the blessing of liberation. Riding on the car formed by the sacred letters OM, men can be absorbed in the great god. Some of the names are as follows. You are he who is full of affection to all creatures, like a parent towards his children, you are the giver of blessings, you are eternal Time, you live in the midst of company; you have big nails, you have a big stomach and a large nose, you are the Mahābhārata and other histories, you are the destroyer, you are the Upanishads, you are Kapila, you are Gautama, you are existent, you are non-existent, you are manifest, you are not manifest, you have a thousand feet and a thousand heads. This hymn when recited with faith, leads to heaven. It saves from disease and bestows length of days. It is in harmony with the Vedas. In closing his panegyric on Shiva, Krishna declared that in a former incarnation, he had worshipped that god for millions of years, and after giving illustrations of what other famous persons had acquired by worshipping

Shiva said that it did not matter what sins a man committed, he might be the destroyer of the whole universe and be stained with every sort of evil, if he worshipped Shiva, these sins would all be wiped away¹

All women are evil Bhishma was next asked his opinion of women. In reply he told a very strange story to illustrate his belief that they were all bad and unworthy of trust. There is only one pleasure and that a sensual one in which they take any satisfaction, and under its influence they lose all thought of husband and child or father and mother. A woman should always be in subjection to some one. In her childhood to her father, in her married life to her husband in her old age to her son. In a later chapter it is said that a woman remains pure only as long as she is not tempted. Destruction, death and hell, the poison of the snake, the sharpness of the razor, the vehemence of fire, are all combined in the person of a woman. Once in her toils, no man can escape. They make falsehood look like truth, and change truth into a lie. They were created for no other purpose than to tempt and deceive men. When the world was first created men were all righteous and became equal to the gods. The deities got alarmed and appealed to the grandsire. He accordingly created women that they might beguile and deceive men, and they have been doing so ever since. ~~The Creator himself cannot restrain them.~~ How then can men hope to do so. The Holy Scriptures say that they are living lies. Bhishma then told a story in illustration of these sentiments regarding women, which is remarkable for the abuse which was heaped by a young Brāhmin on the god Indra. The god was told that he was both very sinful and very foolish. He was a deity who never scrupled to dishonour other men's wives, and in consequence neither gods nor men would worship him for any length of time. He had been cursed by the rishi Gautama for defiling his wife Ahalya. The

¹ A later chapter in this Book of Precepts gives the 1000 names of Krishna or Vishnu and Shiva speaks in Krishna's praise.

thousand eyes he now possessed had once been dishonourable stains on the god's body, which had come as a punishment for his sins. The sum of the whole matter, Bhīshma said, was that men should never love women, never get jealous about them, and when they did enjoy their society, do so in a restrained manner, knowing that it was for the sake of virtue alone that they ever approached them.

The greatness of Brahmins once more. In reply to the question if it was possible for any of the other three castes to attain to the position of a Brāhmin, Yudhishthira was told that such an honour was impossible. One has to pass through endless stages of existence before one can at last be born a Brāhmin. Starting from the life of an animal, a soul first appears among men as a Chandāla, the lowest and most sinful of the outcastes. After spending a thousand years in that order, a man may be born as a Shudra. After many births within this, the fourth and lowest caste, at the end of thirty thousand years, the soul may be born among the Vaishyas. The time allowed to the soul to be passed among the Vaishyas is 180,000 years. When that period has expired, one becomes a member of the Kshatriya order and spends many successive births, lasting for ten millions, eight hundred thousand years, in that caste. At the end of that time the soul may be born as a degraded Brāhmin, and as a degraded Brāhmin, will exist for 2160 millions of years. It then enters a higher order of Brāhmins, those namely who act as soldiers. Among these it will pass 648,000 million years. When that lengthy period of time is over the soul may become a Brāhmin who is able to repeat the Gāyatrī and other sacred verses. This stage of existence will last for 259 millions of millions of years. When that stage is over the Brāhmin will have become the exalted being who knows all the Vedas and other sacred books. When this the highest existence has been attained, joy and grief, desire and hatred with other sins will seek ceaselessly to destroy him. If he is able to resist them, he will achieve

liberation, but it is always possible that he should fail. Bhishma expressed his regret that many Brāhmins did not realize the great privileges they possessed and often lost what it had taken them so many years to acquire. He then told the story of a Chāṇḍīla called Matanga who practised penance for thousands of years in the foolish hope that thereby he might attain to the dignity of a Brāhmin. Indra frequently remonstrated with him and tried to persuade him of the entire uselessness of his attempt. In the end as he was making the gods uncomfortable by his asceticism Matanga was changed into a god. It was possible to make him a god but not a Brāhmin. Indra himself could not hope for such an honour. Bhishma adds that Brāhmins also are able to make men gods, able also to rob gods of their divinity. He is well aware that Brāhmins sometimes are evil livers but the Pāṇḍu must remember that in virtue of their powers they are able to cause people untold injury, able to reduce a kingdom to ashes and therefore need to be always appraised. Nobody who once quarrels with a Brāhmin can ever hope to spend his days in peace. It was by the kindness of the Brāhmins that the gods required the happiness of heaven. There are many pages of this sort but one verse of a higher order deserves to be noted.

'The Brāhmin who is proud of his learning who speaks evil of the Vedas who is fond of useless debate and loves to gain the victory in discussions seeking to disprove the reasons that exist for morality and religion attributing everything to chance who is bitter of speech and suspicious of others, should be considered as hateful as a dog (c 37)

Despite what we are told about Matanga the next chapter tells of a king who was changed into a Brāhmin. The privilege however was conferred not by the gods but by a Rishi. The case of the royal sage Vishvāmitra is also referred to ¹. No attempt is made to reconcile the two chapters.

The rules relating to marriage Bhīshma was next asked to discourse on the rules relating to marriage. Among legitimate forms of marriage, he said that allowing a daughter to choose the man she loved and who loved her was a practice deserving of approval. He condemned as wicked the practice of paying for a girl, as also that of forcible abduction. It will be remembered that Krishna once commended the latter method as the best of all. Bhīshma further stated that a man of thirty should marry a girl of ten, and a man of twenty, a girl of seven. A virgin widow could marry her deceased husband's younger brother.¹ At least this was the opinion of some authorities, while others held that a father could bestow his daughter when left a virgin-widow, on any suitable person he pleased. A wife's property went to her daughter.

A Brāhmin was permitted to marry four wives, one from each of the four castes, according to Yudhishthira.² Bhīshma however said that a Brāhmin who married a Shudra woman would come to a bad end in the next world. Such a practice was forbidden by the Scriptures. His subsequent remarks show however that the practice cannot have been uncommon, for he says that the son of a Shudra wife gets the tenth part of his father's wealth. Sons born to a Brāhmin by wives of the Kshatriya and Vaishya castes are reckoned as Brāhmins. Kshatriyas can marry two wives, one from their own caste, and one from the Vaishyas. They may marry a third wife from the Shudras. The practice is common, but the scriptures do not sanction it. A Vaishya can marry one wife from his own caste. Here too it is recognised that the practice of marrying a Shudra wife prevailed. As to the Shudras they are not allowed to marry more than one wife. It is a very great sin for a man to approach a woman of a higher caste. The children born from such an union are outcastes and objects of scorn and contempt. The lowest of all such outcastes is the Chandāla, the son of a Shudra and a

¹ See Laws of Manu, Bk. IX. 60-69

² See Laws of Manu, III. 13

Brāhmin woman There are many of these outcastes The scriptures prescribe no religious duties in which such people can share Nevertheless if they practice forgiveness compassion and truth and assist Brāhmins and cows they may acquire merit It will be seen that the allurements of women have been responsible for the existence of these outcastes and we are once more warned to beware of them Sometimes a man born of such illegitimate unions tries to pass himself off or is passed off, as of pure descent but blood tells in the long run and you can always find out the truth about a man's birth by noticing how he lives A husband is permitted to invite another person to cohabit with his wife and the child born under these circumstances is recognised as legitimate¹

• **The greatness of gifts** Many pages are devoted to describing the great blessings that attach to making gifts to Brāhmins² The three best gifts are those of land gold and cows but there are other gifts which carry large rewards both in this world and in heaven The man for instance who gives a pair of sandals to a Brāhmin whose feet have been burned by walking bare foot on the hot ground succeeds in crushing all the obstacles that obstruct his path Even if he gave a chariot and a pair of horses he could not get a higher reward The gift of sesame seeds confers on the giver both prosperity and beauty, as well as deliverance from all his sins But the gifts of land and of cows are the most insisted on and at the greatest length Kings are strictly forbidden to resume grants of land if the recipient has happened to transfer such land to Brāhmins It is necessary to choose a propitious time for the making of gifts Certain gifts have their own particularly fortunate hour when the stars are specially favourable But of this we may be sure that when we make gifts to Brāhmins of any thing they want, we shall secure the fruitions of our own wishes and escape every kind of misfortune both here and

¹ See Manu IV. 59

Appendix No 1 The Duty of giving gifts to Brahmins

hereafter This is the sure and certain teaching of the scriptures You get back in the next world, all that you gave in this Yudhisthira was told that if he were generous in his treatment of Brāhmins, he would become a Brahmin in his next birth In this connection there are two verses worth quoting They do not represent the usual teaching of the Mahābhārata (1) Much wealth we are told is bad for Brahmins Wealth and prosperity fill them with pride, and as a result the practice of religion suffers and all creatures come to destruction (2) The king who does not or cannot protect his subjects should be killed as if he were a mad dog

The glory of cows. It is for the gift of cows that the greatest praise is reserved Cows are greater than ascetics Wise men say that they are equal to Brāhmins In former days they were used in sacrifice But it is wrong to do so now They should instead be given as gifts to Brāhmins A bull is the very incarnation of Heaven A cow is the supreme refuge of all creatures The people who give away cows go to a special region called the world of cows (Goloka) and even the gods are not allowed to live there. In a later chapter Indra was told by Brahmā, that in addition to the gift of cows, those who go to that blessed spot must have been full of love and forgiveness to all creatures, obedient to their parents, truthful, gentle and self-controlled as well as thorough vegetarians It is not every cow that the Brāhmins are willing to accept She should be young and healthy, of a gentle disposition, easily milked and accompanied by her calf The man who sells or steals a cow, or who eats her flesh will suffer in hell for as many years as the cow has hairs on her body If the stealer of a cow gives the animal to a Brāhmin he will go to heaven as a reward but thereafter he will need to live as long in hell, because of the theft By giving away a cow you save your ancestors and your descendants from hell for seven generations up and down If you add gold to your gift, you will double the number of generations saved The man

who sells himself to buy a cow as a gift to a Brāhmin will discover that there are regions of eternal bliss in every part of the cow he purchased. A man was born as a Chāṇḍāl for no other reason than that he ate some food sprinkled with the milk of a cow that belonged to a Brāhmin. We have the Chāṇḍāl's own testimony to the truth of this because he was able to remember what had happened in his previous birth. You will thus realize the danger of appropriating even not to speak of stealing anything that belongs to a Brāhmin. The last thing at night the first thing in the morning, that a pious man ought to do is to repeat the names of cows, bowing before them in all reverence the while. The first original cow was born from the eruption of Dāśarī, one of the mind born sons of Brāhmā. The cow was called Surabhi. The cows acquired their pre-eminence by undergoing a penance that lasted 100 000 years. Vasiṣṭha says that the givers of cows will be welcomed in heaven by a thousand lovely maidens whose one object will be to minister to their pleasure. Another device for reaching the heavenly abode of cows is to drink the hot urine of a cow for three days in succession. The murderer of a Brāhmin can obtain forgiveness if he lives for a month on the grains of barley that he is able to collect from cow dung. When the demons were defeated by the gods they practised this expiation. It was so full of merit that they got their old position as deities. It is most improper to feel any repugnance for the urine and dung of cows. The goddess of prosperity whom gods and men so ardently long to possess once asked permission to enter into cows. She said she wanted to live in every one of them. The cows, however, repelled her advances saying that she was too free with her favours and conferred them on every one. She could go where she liked but they neither required nor wished her presence. Thus rebuffed, the goddess only pleaded the more. She was willing to dwell in the most ignoble and repulsive part of their bodies, which she specified in detail and would consider it an honour to do so. This was an appeal

which the cows, gentle of nature and anxious to be kind as they always are, could not refuse. The result was that after a conference they graciously allowed Shri, the goddess of prosperity to live in their urine and dung. (c 82) When Yudhisthira had heard this account of the greatness and glory of cows, he made gifts of cows by hundreds of thousands to the Brāhmins and vowed that he would never again yoke bullocks to his car ¹

The merit of fasting. When questioned as to the value of abstaining from food, Bhīshma said that the illustrious Bhagīratha gave it as his testimony that he had acquired his exalted position not through sacrifices or penances or gifts, but by means of fasting. He had been known all over the world for his austerities. He had given away untold wealth to Brāhmins, horses and cows, women and gold. He had performed thousands of sacrifices. But it was fasting that carried him at last to a heavenly land more exalted and glorious than even the region of cows.

The blessings attached to fasts, for one day or two days up to thirty days are then given in detail. For example a five days' fast is more efficacious than a cow-sacrifice. An extra day will secure the companionship of the lovely Apsarases in heaven. If you fast for seventeen days you will get a heavenly car drawn by tigers and lions. It is noteworthy that nearly every blessing includes the promise of acquiring heavenly nymphs in the other world. The advantage of fasting is that anybody can fast. It is only the rich who can afford to offer sacrifices or make gifts, but the poorest man can abstain from food, and thus acquire untold blessings.

Various precepts. The rest of this book deals with a large number of miscellaneous duties, which are of no particular interest to the general reader. A considerable section relates a lengthy conversation that took place between the god Shiva and his wife. Some of the

¹ The succeeding chapter is of the nature of an anti-climax. It declares that gold is the best of all gifts, because the gods are included in Agni, and gold has Agni for its essence.

observations made by these and other speakers are given as illustrations of the whole.

A man is born alone and dies alone. When all have abandoned him virtue follows him to the other world.

The true pilgrimage is the pilgrimage of the soul. And the only waters that can cleanse it are the waters of Truth. The man who merely wets his body has performed no pilgrimage. He must wash himself with the waters of self denial and obtain deliverance from greed and falsehood. The same chapter however declares without any reservation that by repeating the names of the different places of pilgrimage a man can wash away his sins. A Brāhmin who suffers from leprosy or consumption, who acts as a physician, who attends to the images of the gods or who teaches the Vedas in return for a salary should not be invited to Shrāddhas. A Brāhmin who assists at a sacrifice for a degraded person will have to pass through a series of lives as a worm, an ass, a pig, a cock, a jackal and a dog. Thereafter he will be again born as a man. Any one guilty of ingratitude will be tortured horribly in hell and then have to pass through one hundred births among the lower animals before recovering his manhood. The Vaishya who gives one sixth of his income to Brāhmins cleanses himself from all sin. If you make gifts of food, you will never go to Hell.

A man is freed from his sins when he repents of them.

The merciful man attains the highest good. You should never do to others what you know to be hurtful to yourself.

Wise men never eat meat. Those who eat it have great difficulty in breaking off the habit. There is nothing superior to meat in taste. It very quickly imparts strength. The giving up of the use of flesh is an act of the very highest virtue. One should never eat meat not dedicated at a sacrifice. There is very little blame in eating flesh that has been offered in sacrifice or killed for the purpose of feeding Brāhmins.

Any other kind of killing is useless slaughter. A Kshatriya is permitted to hunt. Royal sages used to do so. Abstaining from cruelty however is the heart of religion and if you never taste meat from the day of your birth, you will get an exalted place in heaven.

The man who kicks a cow has to spend one hundred lives in Hell.

• He who cuts down a large tree on the day of the new moon is as bad as the murderer of a Brahmin.

When a cock or a dog is seen at a sacrifice the gods do not accept it.

A man may offer the horse-sacrifice, he may practise the most severe penance, hanging head-downwards, if his heart is not pure, he will go to Hell.

If you chew a tooth brush on the day of the new moon, you injure the moon god.

If you give away a cow at Pushkar on the day of the full moon in the month Kārttik you will never experience any kind of distress.

The Brāhmin who eats food from a Shudra is eating the filth of the world.

Physicians and men who fight for pay are both Shudras.

If a Shudra wishes to be born as a Vaishya at his next birth he should abstain from all meat not offered in sacrifice.

A Shudra who has cleansed his soul by pure deeds deserves to be waited on, as if he were a Brāhmin, indeed he is superior. So Mahādeva has said. Bhīshma, however, a few pages further on, repeats the usual opinion that even if a Brāhmin be always engaged in doing evil, he is worthy of all honour. He ever remains a great god despite his sins, just as fire at a burning ghāt is not stained by the fact that it is burning there.

The man who, when struck, does not strike back, obtains the dignity of a god.

The man who never speaks cruel or bitter words and is free from deceit will certainly go to heaven.

There are many mantras by the daily repetition of which a man is cleansed of sin.

There are also many names which carry similar power for example the names of the thirty three gods (the eleven Rudras, the twelve Ādityas the eight Vasus and the two Āshwins) As the boöl approaches its close, Bhishma repeats the thousand names of Vishnu They are in many ways similar to the thousand names of Shiva given earlier Shiva also is made to sing Vishnu's praise The daily recital of these names delivers men from every kind of evil

Bhishma's teaching appropriately closes with further stories illustrating the power of Brāhmīns particularly the great Rishis who bent not only ordinary gods but the great Krishna to their will

Krishna had a wonderful experience with Durvāsa, that very irritable person who subjected both Krishna and his wife Rukmīni to great indignities In consequence, Krishna resolved always to do whatever a Brāhmīn told him to do It was by implicit obedience to their commands that he had enjoyed so much happiness and prosperity It is only fair to add that Krishna received Durvāsa's blessing for his docile obedience and in particular a mantra, in praise of Shiva, the highest of all beings the god whose merits cannot be told if one had a hundred years to tell them in

Bhishma dies Having finished his long discourse and answered a multitude of questions the aged warrior bade Yudhīsthira return to Hastināpura and assume the sovereignty of his own recovered empire Yudhīsthira did so and was duly installed on the throne At the end of fifty days he returned to the battle field, bringing sandal wood and other precious stuffs for use in cremating the body of Bhishma The dying man said he had now lain on his arrowy bed for fifty eight nights and he was anxious to be gone The time had passed as slowly as if it were an hundred years but the auspicious hour for death was at last arrived Turning to Krishna whom he called the god of gods the Supreme Eternal Soul, he asked permission to depart Krishna gave him leave and as he did so, declared that Bhishma had never been guilty of one solitary sin all through his life

The arrow then left Bhīshma's body, and his soul emerging from the top of his head, passed through the sky like a meteor, in the sight of all observers. The funeral rites were duly performed and then the Pāndus accompanied by Krishna, the attendant rishis, the ladies of the Bhārata family, and a great crowd of citizens went to perform the water oblation on the banks of the river Bhāgīrathī. When they reached its shores, Ganga, who it will be remembered was the mother of Bhīshma, rose up out of the waters, overcome by sorrow. When she had spoken in praise of her dead son, Krishna told her not to shed useless tears for one who had passed in the fullness of years to spend a happy life in heaven.

The Horse Sacrifice

'ASHWAMEDHA describes the horse sacrifice offered by Yudhisthira

Preparations for the sacrifice Soon after their return to Hastināpura when Bhishma's funeral ceremonies were over the rishi Vyāsa told his grand sons that they must get ready to perform the horse sacrifice. It was a token of universal domination but it would serve the larger purpose of purging away all their sins. To this Yudhisthira replied that he would be only too glad to do so but the wickedness of Duryodhana had left them with an empty treasury, and he was not willing to levy tribute on princes whose realms he had helped to conquer and exhaust.

However Vyāsa had a solution ready and he told the Pāndus of untold wealth which had been left in the Himalayas by Brāhmins after the performance of a great sacrifice by a king called Marutta¹. That prince was able to produce whole armies and every kind of wealth by blowing on his hand. He had had a great quarrel with the god Indra and his priest Brihaspati in which Marutta's priest Samvarta threatened to burn up both Indra and Agni. In the end amicable relations were established and Indra helped at the sacrifice. In any case immense quantities of gold had been offered and most of it was still lying hidden among the mountain. Preparations were accordingly made to get the treasure.

The Anugita Krishna however said that he wanted to go home to Dwāraka. He had not seen his people for a long time. Before he set off Arjuna said he was sorry to admit it but he had forgotten all that Krishna

¹ See *Vishnu Purana*

had told him the day before the battle. He was here referring to the Bhagavadgītā. Krishna was annoyed at such a confession, and told his friend that it was a proof that he was lacking both in faith and intelligence. He had to acknowledge, however, that he could not remember it all himself. So he repeated something he once heard from a Brāhmin, which was more than Arjuna required. Thirty-six chapters of this brief book are then devoted to what is called the Anugītā or subsequent gītā.¹ According to Mr. K. T. Telang it is of considerably more recent date than the Bhagavadgītā, and is not a work of very great reputation.

Krishna leaves for Dwaraka. Before leaving, Krishna helped to console Yudhishthira who was still distressed to think that he had caused the deaths of so many brave men. Krishna's view was that as no creature is ever really killed then there was no sin in destroying its body. He wisely added that a man did not acquire salvation by going to the forest and giving up his kingdom as the Pāndu wished to do, but by giving up the things in which his flesh delighted. A man could have a craving for earthly things in a forest as easily as elsewhere.

On his way home, Krishna met a famous ascetic called Utanka, who became very angry when he learned that Krishna had not prevented the slaughter of the Kurus. Krishna replied that he had done his very best, but it was not possible to fight against fate.

Utanka however would listen to no excuses and was about to curse Krishna, when the latter reminded him that he was about to curse the Creator and Destroyer of the Universe. He was the existent and the non-existent. And Utanka would be spending uselessly his stock of merit acquired by painful penances, if he wasted it on cursing him.

This frank statement pacified the angry ascetic, and he asked Krishna to shew him his divine form. Krishna graciously agreed, and Utanka beheld a

¹ See Note 14. *The Bhagavadgītā*

wonderful figure, whose head touched the sky, and which shone with the brightness of a thousand suns. Before parting with the ascetic, Krishna granted him a boon, to the effect that whenever he wanted water in those sandy deserts where he dwelt, he would at once obtain it by thinking on Krishna.

Stories about Utanka Not long after, Utanka resolved to test the boon that Krishna had given him and began to think of that gracious deity. Right away there appeared before him a ragged dirty naked hunter, from whose organ of urination a great stream of water poured. The hunter politely addressed the ascetic and invited him to drink. Instead of drinking however the ascetic was very angry indeed and persuaded that Krishna had tried to mock him. He was somewhat amazed, however, when the hunter suddenly disappeared from view. His wonder was added to, when Krishna all at once appeared and told him that the hunter was no less a person than the god Indra who had come very unwillingly, but at his command, to give him water to drink and thus confer immortality. However despite the greatness of his sin in declining the hunter's offer Krishna graciously forgave him and said that whenever he was thirsty, he was to summon the clouds of heaven together, and they would send down abundance of rain.

This Utanka had lived with Gautama rishi for many years as a disciple. It was only when he was old and bent with years that he had asked for his discharge. Gautama was so pleased with him that he changed him into a youth of sixteen and gave him his daughter in marriage. As a disciple's fee Utanka promised to get a pair of wonderful ear rings for Ahalya, Gautama's wife. These ear rings belonged to the wife of a man eating Rākshasa. As the Rākshasa had a great respect for Brāhmins Utanka was able to get them despite the fact that their possessor was saved for ever from hunger and thirst, poison and fire, and acquired unlimited supplies of gold as well. They were stolen by a snake however, who carried them down

to hell, to the land of the Nāgas. Utanka got the help of the god Indra to dig a hole with his thunderbolt, and when he reached the nether world was greatly pleased with what he saw: cities with walls of gold and gates five hundred miles in breadth; tanks whose stair-cases were made of the purest crystal; and rivers full of delightful water.

With the assistance, of the god Agni, he finally succeeded in recovering the ear-ring and duly presented them to his mother-in-law Abhaya.

Krishna reaches Dwaraka. When Dwāraka was reached, Krishna had to give an account of the battle at Kurukshetra. He tried to conceal the death of Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna and his sister Subhadra, but the sister herself bade her brother give a description of it.

When the funeral rites for this lamented youth were performed, Krishna gave great gifts to no less than six millions Brāhmins, and was successful in satisfying their thirst for wealth. To comfort the sorrowing relatives, Vyāsa, by virtue of his divine power, suddenly appeared and told them not to weep. The widow of Abhimanyu would soon give birth to a glorious son who would rule over the whole earth.

Marutta's wealth secured. Before setting out for the Himalayas, the Pāndus made offerings to Shiva and to Kubera, the god of wealth. They also sought the blessings of Brāhmins on their enterprise. It was abundantly successful. 100,000 elephants, 120,000 horses, 60,000 camels, cars and carts, mules and men without number were required to transport the wealth. One gets an idea of the amount by hearing that each camel carried 16,000 golden coins. Their burdens were so heavy that they could not march more than four miles a day.

The birth of Parikshit. It will be remembered that Ashwatthāman had by the Brahmā weapon already killed the child in the womb of Uttara, wife of Abhimanyu.¹ The dead child was born just at the time

that Krishna came back to Hastinapura to take part in the Horse sacrifice. The sorrowing women appealed to Krishna to bring the babe back to life. It was the sole living descendant of the Pāṇḍu race. Krishna had already given some sort of promise and in view of the fact he never uttered a falsehood, he uttered the words 'Let this child revive'. It was this child who got the name of Parikshit and for whose death by snake bite, his son Janamejaya sought vengeance in the great snake sacrifice at which the Mahābhārata was recited.

The wanderings of the horse The Pāṇḍus having now brought back sufficient treasure, preparations for the sacrifice at once commenced. Part of the ceremony however demanded that the selected horse should be set free to wander, as it willed for the space of a year. It was necessary that one of the Pāṇḍus should follow the animal and fight with any person or persons who ventured to touch it. It was agreed that Arjuna should perform this duty. The horse that was chosen by a committee of Brāhmins and chariotcers was black in colour. Arjuna followed it in a car drawn by white steeds. Before setting out Yudhishthira told his brother to avoid fighting as much as possible but to demand that the princes whom he conquered should attend the sacrifice in Hastinapura. Arjuna was followed by many Brāhmins and Kshatriyas in his wanderings. The horse when set free made first for the country of the Trigarttas. From there it passed to the kingdoms of Prāgyotishra, Manipura, and Magadha. It then travelled along the sea to the countries of the Pundras and Kosalas, Arjuna the while meeting and overcoming great armies of Mlecchhas and Kirātas. It passed through the territories of the Andhras and Drāvidas till it came to the southern sea. Then turning north, it finally reached Dwāraka, where Krishna's father prevented the young men of his race from interfering with the horse.

The journey was then continued through the land of the five rivers. When the country of Gāndhāra was reached, where the last contest took place, the horse

finally made for home, and at last arrived at Hastinā-pura. The Pāndus were greatly delighted to find that their brother had got back safe and sound. In his wanderings, Arjuna fought with the sons and subjects of many of the princes who had been killed at Kurukshetra.

The main incident was his encounter with his own son, now king of Manipura. It will be remembered that in his first exile Arjuna had married Chitrāngadā, daughter of the king of Manipura, and lived with her for three years. He had also formed a connection with Ulūpi the daughter of the snake-king. Both of these ladies appeared on the scene¹. Arjuna's son did not wish to fight with his father, but Arjuna insisted on his doing so. In the fight that took place, Arjuna was slain. Happily for all concerned, the snake princess had a gem which was able to restore the dead to life. She bade her step-son place it on the dead man's breast. Whenever he did so Arjuna returned to life. It is worth noticing that when Arjuna got back, Yudhis-thira asked Krishna why it was that Arjuna, all through life, should have experienced so many sorrows. Krishna said that in his opinion, the explanation was that his cheek-bones were somewhat too high. He could conceive of no other explanation. Draupadī was very angry at the suggestion that there could be any defect in one she loved so much as Arjuna.

The sacrifice begins. The whole population of the earth (Jambudwīpa) with all its kingdoms and provinces was gathered to witness the sacrifice. The ground was specially laid out with hundreds of palaces, columns and pavements of gold were studded with precious stones. Triumphal arches and sacrificial stakes were all of gold. Brāhmīns were present in great numbers and took part in many learned discussions. There were hills of food and lakes of butter. Birds and beasts to the number of three hundred were fastened to the sacrificial stakes. There were bulls among the latter. These animals were

cooked first, and then the priests in accordance with the rites laid down sacrificed the horse itself. They next divided its body into a number of pieces, and caused Dr̥upadi to sit near them. Thereafter they cooked the animal's marrow and presented it to the Pīndus to smell. This was the principal part of the ceremony, for it is said that the smoke of the marrow was able to purge away every sin. This yet over, the rest of the animal was cast into the sacrificial fires. In accordance with custom Yudhishthira then presented the earth to the Brāhmins. Vyāsa however on their behalf declined the gift and said they would take gold instead. This was done and the Brāhmins were presented with millions of gold coins. When the Brāhmins had taken all they wanted what was left over was divided among the three other castes and the Mlechhas. The people then gave themselves up to feasting. The arena was crowded with intoxicated men and the women are said to have been filled with joy. An unlimited number of animals were also killed to supply food.

A mongoose speaks. As the sacrifice was about to close, a mongoose emerged from its hole and addressed the multitude. It declared that the great sacrifice which they had just witnessed was not equal in merit to the offering of a few handfuls of barley which had been given by a Brāhmin who was observing the uchheya vow. This vow consists of living on grains of corn picked up from the ground after the manner of a pigeon. When asked for an explanation the mongoose explained that once upon a time, during a great famine a Brāhmin had given the few grains of barley he had thus, laboriously gathered to a Brāhmin guest who had come to his house and asked for food. Not only so, but he allowed his starving wife son and daughter to surrender their portions to feed their still hungry guest. It turned out that the guest was no other than Dharma the god of Piety who declared that the Brāhmin had rescued his ancestors for countless ages.

Seeds not animals should be used for sacrifice When he asked why the mongoose spoke disrespectfully of the horse-sacrifice, Janamejaya was told that at a great sacrifice conducted by Indra, the rishis had expressed their repugnance at the idea of so many animals being needlessly slaughtered. They did not believe that such destruction had even been ordained. They advised that in future only seeds should be used. This proposal however Indra angrily refused to entertain, and it was only after a long dispute that he agreed to leave the matter to the arbitrament of king Vasu. The king was accordingly requested to state what was the practice of the Vedas. Instead of listening to argument and hearing proofs, Vasu at once replied that it was permitted to offer either animals or seeds. For this impious reply the king of Chedi went to hell.

On another occasion Indra caused offence to the rishis by deciding to withhold rain for a period of twelve years, when the great Agastya was celebrating sacrifices with seeds. Agastya however announced that if Indra did not show him proper respect, he would transform himself into another Indra, and assume the sovereignty of the world. He was prepared to create a new world if necessary. He was able to make more than one if he liked. This brought Indra to his senses, and he poured down abundance of rain.

The Hermitage Book

‘ASHRAMAVASIKA PARVA This is a short book It tells of how Dhritarāshtra with Gāndhārī Kuntī and Vidura retired to the forest, and of how they died

The Pandus and Kurus live happily together

For fifteen years, Yudhishthira continued to reign at Hastināpura consulting his uncle Dhritarāshtra in all things and treating him with the greatest respect The old king was gratified by being allowed to pardon and set free prisoners under sentence of death The richest kinds of food and drink, the costliest clothes and furniture were procured for him When he went for a holiday, the Pāndus saw to it that he was supplied with every thing he required and in the greatest profusion Tributary kings too, waited on him as before Vidura the other uncle the son of Vyāsa and the serving girl was also constantly consulted, and was responsible for both the religious and legal administration of the kingdom

There was one exception however to this generous treatment and that was Bhīma He refuses to forget their years of suffering and exile and even secretly encouraged the servants of the palace to disobey the old king Apart from that, we are told that Dhritarāshtra was never so happy with his own sons as with the sons of Pāndu

The conduct of Bhīma in the end however began to tell and in particular when he heard that Bhīma was boasting of how he had slain his cousins in battle, the old man gave way to sorrow, declaring that it was now manifest he must do something more to expiate his sins He must seek in the forest by penance and fasting, to atone for the evil he had wrought by not restraining his foolish sons When Yudhishthira heard

of his uncle's resolve to go to the forest, his grief knew no bounds. If he went, they would all go. He had no desire to rule the kingdom any longer. He generously offered to surrender his sceptre to Yuyutsu, a son of Dhritarāshtra and a Vaishya woman. The Rishi Vyāsa, however, interposed, and said that it was most right and proper that Dhritarāshtra should do as royal sages had done in days gone by. It was the greatest duty that a king could perform to end his days in the forest. There was no other end worthy of kings.

Dhritarashtra goes to the forest. When the citizens heard of the old king's resolution there was great sorrow throughout the city and provinces. Dhritarāshtra asked the people's forgiveness for any faults and errors of which he might have been guilty in his rule. In reply he was told that there had never been in all his royal house one prince who had been unpopular. They declared that his son Duryodhana had never been guilty of any evil or unjust deed. What had happened had happened because Destiny willed it and no one could fight against fate. One comfort they had, and that was that the Pāndus would not leave them and they were fit to rule heaven, not to speak of earth. Before setting out Dhritarāshtra resolved to perform Shrāddha ceremonies in honour of Bhīshma and his dead sons. Unfortunately Bhīma once more acted very badly, saying he objected to any expenditure or ceremony that would help to deliver Duryodhana's soul from hell. This cruel speech also reached the ears of Dhritarāshtra, and caused fresh sorrow. Yudhishthira however made amends, and placed at the king's disposal wealth without end, which the poet terms a Dhritarāshtra ocean whose waters were jewels, whose islands were villages and fields and whose whirlpools were elephants and horses without number.

These countless gifts falling like rain upon the thirsty earth refreshed the souls of thousands of Brāhmins and rishis.

When Dhritarāshtra left for the forest, after the Shrāddha was completed, he was accompanied by his

wife Gāndhārī, his brother Vidura, Sanjaya his charioteer, and Kuntī the mother of the Pāndus. The decision of Kuntī to take up an ascetic life caused great grief to her sons, but she refused to yield to their persuasions. The whole populace crowded the streets and followed them far on their way. It is said that women who had never once seen the sun and moon came out to witness the departure of those they loved so much. The two queens as well as the others had already put on their forest dress, the bark of trees and deer skins. When her sons asked her why she should not stay and enjoy with them the kingdom they had won, she said she had but one desire to join her husband in the bliss of heaven. The royal princes escorted their relatives for some distance and then returned. The ascetics themselves spent the first night on the banks of the Ganges and next day visited the hermitage of Vyāsa who gave them instruction how to regulate their lives.

Life in the Forest Not long after they had settled down to their new existence, they were honoured by a visit from the great Nārada and other rishis. In reply to a question, Nārada stated that Dhritarāshtra would obtain a very high place in heaven when he died. He had heard Indra himself say so, on one of his frequent visits to the celestial regions. This statement afforded great satisfaction to the old king.

They were also visited by the Pāndus, who were filled with anxiety as to how their aged relatives were bearing the rigours of an ascetic life. Yudhishthira in particular could not bear to think of his mother, who had been used to every sort of luxury, lying on the ground. The whole royal household including all the ladies of their race as well as soldiers and citizens decided to join in the expedition. Great preparations were made. The cooks were instructed to provide every kind of food. Closed litters in thousands were provided for the princesses and other ladies. Elephants, camels and chariots of gold were at the disposal of the men.

Dhritarāshtra and his companions had by this time settled at Kurukshetra. When Yudhishthira arrived

he found them on the banks of the Jumna, struggling under the weight of their water pots which they had just filled. Vidura however was not present. They learned that he was practising severe 'austerities' living on air, and that he had become horribly thin. Just at that moment Vidura as seen in the distance, quite naked and his body covered with filth. When Yudhishtira went forward to greet him, Vidura turned and fled. Yubhishtira pursued him and eventually when he overtook him, he found the old man leaning against a tree. It was with difficulty that Yudhishtira recognized him. Then a wonderful thing happened. Yudhishtira suddenly realized that he had received a great accession of strength and when he looked again at Vidura, he saw that he was dead. The explanation was that Vidura's spirit had joined itself to that of Yudhishtira. They were both sons or incarnations of Dharma, the god of piety.

The dead heroes are called up. The Pāndus spent a month in the hermitage with their relatives. By the special permission of Dhritarāshtra, they used all kinds of food and drink, and enjoyed their visit very much. Towards the close of their stay, Vyāsa said he would be pleased to show them the wonderful power of his penances and told Dhritarāshtra and the others to ask for any boon they liked. Gāndhārī at once replied that the greatest boon they craved was to see their dead sons once again. She knew too that Draupadī and the other ladies who had lost sons and husbands could desire no greater boon.

Vyāsa cordially agreed to grant their prayer. He further explained that none of the princes living or dead were ordinary mortals. Pāndu really sprang from the Maruts. The hundred sons of Dhritarāshtra were all Rākshasas. Drona was Brihaspati, while his son was a portion of Rudra. Abhimanyu was Soma. Dhritarāshtra himself was the king of the Gandharvas. It was on the banks of the Ganges that Vyāsa displayed his power, and after darkness had fallen. We are told that when Vyāsa had bathed, he approached the sacred stream, and called aloud. His summons were at once

obeyed and with a mighty roar, the spirits of the dead princes in thousands, rose up out of the waters. The hundred Kṛṣṇas, the sons of Draupadī whom she bore to the five Pāṇḍus, Ghatotkacha the Rakshasa son of Bhīma, Bhīshma and Drona with many more brave heroes and attended by the armies that had fought with them at Kurukshetra these all emerged, wearing the dress and armour they had worn on the fateful days of battle. But they were clad too in heavenly raiment and their hearts were purged of all pride and anger. It was a glad time for wives and mothers. Dhṛitarāshtra received his sight that for the first time he might look upon his sons. The Pāṇḍus even were reconciled with Karna, their lifelong foe.

With the first streaks of dawn and at the word of Vyasa the ghostly visitants disappeared once more within the depths of the river and from there passed on their heavenly cars to the regions from which they had come some to that of Brahmā some to Varuna, some to Kuvera.

The power of Vyasa was not yet exhausted. Addressing the widows who were present, and whose brief joy had been again turned into mourning, he said that those who wished might plunge into the sacred stream, and they would without fail pass through the skies to join their husbands in their heavenly home. No sooner had he spoken than these noble women dived into the river and were seen no more.

Janamejaya was so impressed with this story and yet unwilling to believe it, that he appealed to Vyāsa, who it will be remembered recited the whole Mahābhārata to him at the snake sacrifice, to show him his own father Parikshit. Vyāsa graciously consented to strengthen his listener's feeble faith and Parikshit was recalled for a little to cheer his son. The ministers and other servants of the king are witnesses to the truth of what we say.

Death of Dhṛitarāshtra, Gandharī and Kuntī

Now that these wonderful events had taken place, Dhṛitarāshtra and his royal companions were anxious

that their visitors should depart. They felt that the earthly joys they were tasting with so many loved ones were weakening the power of the penances that they had undergone. Yudhishthira pleaded for permission to stay, but his mother and others steadfastly refused, and so reluctantly and slowly the princes returned to Hastināpura.

A period of two years passed, making three years in all, since the forest life had been begun, and nothing more was heard of the three royal ascetics. One day however Nārada came and told Yudhishthira of their tragic end. It seemed that Dhritarāshtra had passed months living on air alone. Gāndhārī took food not oftener than once a month. Sanjaya the charioteer ate a little every sixth day. As a result they were reduced to skeletons and so weak that they could scarcely move.

One day as they sat on the banks of the Ganges a great wind arose, and with it a forest fire. The flames soon surrounded them and Sanjaya alone had strength to escape. It was he who came and told Nārada of how the other three had perished in the flames. When he heard this sad tale Yudhishthira began to abuse Agni, the god of fire. He was greatly comforted however to learn that it was Dhritarāshtra's own sacrificial fires which had set the forest in a blaze, and that he had thus as it were ascended to heaven in the flames of his own sacrifice.

Accompanied by all the inhabitants of the city as well as by Yuyutsu, Dhritarāshtra's only surviving son, the Pandus hastened to the Ganges. They duly performed the water oblation, a rite which cleanses the living and cheers the dead. They also caused the ceremony of cremation to be gone through and when the twelfth day had come, they celebrated the Shrāddhas, giving as usual costly gifts without end, as much as they desired, to the Brahmins in their train. Yudhishthira felt more than ever the burden of life and sovereignty. His love for Krishna alone kept him fettered to the world.

XVI

The Book of Clubs

MAUSALA TĀMA This section is only a few pages in length. It tells of the deaths of Krishna and his brother Balarama and of the destruction of their race.

The curse of the Rishis In the thirty sixth year after the battle many terrible portents were seen. The hearts of the Pāndus were filled with fear of impending evils. And after a short time the awful news reached Hastināpura that Krishna with his brother Balarama and the whole of the Yadu race were dead. This calamity so far as it affected the Yadus was due to the fact that some of their young men played a trick on the rishis Nārada, Kanva and Vishwamitra. One day these three great personages came to Dwāraka and the Vrishnu heroes dressed up Shāmya the son of Krishna, as a woman and taking her to the rishis said that she was very anxious to obtain a son. They invited the help of the rishis and asked what kind of son would be born. The rishis were moved to great anger, nothing could be concealed from such holy men and they answered that the very next day Shāmya would give birth to an iron bolt which would cause the destruction of the Yadus with the exception of Krishna and Balarama. Of Balarama they said that he would enter the ocean and of Krishna that he would die of wounds received at the hand of a hunter. When Krishna heard of the curse he simply said that the appointments of fate must not be interfered with. Though the lord of the universe, he had no desire to change the decree.

Next day, as foretold, Shāmya gave birth to an iron bolt. Ugrasena, the father of Kansa caused the bolt to be ground to powder and cast into the ocean. The order also was given that no one should manufacture

intoxicating liquors and terrible punishments were decreed against those who should act contrary to this command. It was said that the young men were intoxicated when they insulted the rishis. These precautions however were of no avail. Death roamed the streets of Dwāraka and peered into every dwelling. Thousands of arrows were discharged against her but they did her no harm. Terrible portents too were seen. Cows gave birth to asses, mules to elephants. The Yadus, realising that nothing could stay their fate, gave way, to all kinds of sinful excesses. They even treated the Brāhmīns with contempt. Krishna too remembered the curse of Gāndhārī and the curse of Durvāsa, and realised that his own time had come.

The destruction of Yadus. He accordingly gave orders that the Yadus with their wives should go to Prabhāsa and bathe in the sacred waters. Before they set out, two other wonderful portents were seen. The discus of Vishnu disappeared passing through the sky while the chariot and horses of Krishna fled across the ocean. At Prabhāsa no restrictions were made as to either food or drink. In their madness, the foolish princes mingled wine with the food that had been prepared for the Brāhmīns and in their gross impiety gave this food to monkeys. Their gathering soon became a scene of wild intoxication and from drunkenness they passed to quarrelling and blows. In the end, Krishna's son Shāmva was killed. Filled with anger, Krishna plucked a handful of grass and at once it was transformed into a mighty weapon with which he slew all who approached. Imitating his example, the other Yadus plucked handfuls of grass and in their case also the grass was transformed to weapons of iron. Son killed father, father killed son. They were so drunk that they did not know what they had done. It is said that Balarāma shared in their carousals. At that fatal picnic five hundred thousands of the Yadu race were slain. Practically only Krishna and Balarāma remained alive.

The death of Balarama and Krishna When the slaughter was over Krishna returned to Dwārakā and sent a message to Arjuna to come and take care of the women of his house. He then went to bid farewell to his father Viśudeva. He said that he could no longer stay in Dwārakā bereft of his kinsmen. He was going to the forest where he would join his brother Kīma. When he got to the place however, where Rīma was, he saw a great snake coming out of his brother's mouth. It was as big as a mountain and had a thousand heads. It set off in the direction of the ocean when it was met and welcomed by a large number of deities and demigods. In this wonderful way did the spirit of Balakīma depart from the earth. After wandering for some time full of thought in the forest Krishna resolved that the words of Durīśa should now be fulfilled. Otherwise how could men fail to doubt that every act bore its appropriate fruit: how otherwise could the foundations of the three worlds be made secure. It will be remembered that when Krishna was once day entertaining that irascible sage Krishna failed to wipe off some food which chanced to fall on the rishi's foot. For this neglect the rishi cursed Krishna and declared that he would die from a wound on his foot¹. And so he who is the lord of the universe of gods and men sat down on the bare ground in the attitude of Yoga with his left leg across his right thigh, thus exposing the sole of his foot the only part of his body which was vulnerable. He had not long to wait. A hunter named Jara approached and mistaking Krishna for a deer shot an arrow which pierced him in the foot. When the hunter saw the greatness of his blunder he was filled with horror and fear. Krishna however told him not to be afraid. Having said this, his soul ascended to heaven filling the whole sky with light. He was welcomed above by all the celestial hosts before he passed to his own abode, which is beyond the knowledge or understanding of men.

Arjuna arrives at Dwaraka When Arjuna arrived in obedience to Krishna's message, he found his uncle Vāsudeva plunged in grief, wondering why his son who was the Lord of the Universe had allowed such calamities to happen. Vāsudeva also communicated the startling fact that Dwāraka itself would soon be submerged beneath the ocean, and told Arjuna to make all arrangements for conveying the women and children of his race to the kingdom of the Pāndus.

Before the next day dawned, Vāsudeva, by the help of Yoga, had passed to the other world. His body was carried with all honour to the burning ghat and four of his wives ascended the funeral pyre.

The bodies of Krishna and Balarāma also were brought from the forest and cremated.

When these and other rites in honour of the dead had been performed, Arjuna set out for his own country, accompanied by the widows of the Yadus, amounting to many millions. The inhabitants of the city and surrounding country were also with him. It is said that innumerable warriors of the Yadu race were also in his train.

Whenever they had set out, the waters of the ocean rushed in, devouring the land behind the very footsteps of the departing multitudes. They travelled with great comfort until they reached the land of the five rivers. There however they were attacked by robbers, desirous of seizing their women and wealth. The Yadus made a very poor fight. The robbers declared that they saw only one bow-man before them, and that was Arjuna. In former days the putting to flight of a whole army was an easy task. But now he found that his hand had lost its cunning, and that he could not even string his famous bow. He then tried to call to his aid those celestial weapons which had never failed him in the past. But these, alas, did not appear. Stricken with shame, Arjuna saw the robbers carry away thousands of the chief ladies of the Yadu race. Others, still more wretched, went of their own accord. It was with great difficulty and accompanied by but a poor remnant of

the great multitude that had set out from Dwārakā that Arjunā had reached his own country. When they arrived five of Kṛṣṇa's queens expressed the desire to perform sī. The others, at least those who were left of Kṛṣṇa's sixteen thousand wives adopted the forest life resolved to pass the rest of their days in works of piety and devotion.

When Arjunā paid a visit to Vyās to tell him all that had taken place his grandfather told him that had Kṛṣṇa wished it he could have interfered with destiny and set aside the curse of the rishis. He was able to change all things he who was the Lord of all. But it was his pleasure that what had happened should happen. As for his grandsons, the sons of Pāṇdu Vyās declared that their time had come also and that they must get ready to depart for the other world.

XVII

The Book of the Great Journey

'MAHAPRASHASTHA-PARVA.' Describes how the Pāndus with Draupadi set out for heaven

On the way to heaven When Arjuna came and told his brothers of the death of Krishna and the message of Vyāsa, they all gladly agreed to make preparations to depart. Paṇḍit, the grandson of Arjuna, was installed upon the throne of Hastināpura, Vajra the sole survivor of the Yadus was made king of Indraprastha, Yuyutsu the son of Dhritarāshtra was appointed regent. In honour of Krishna sumptuous gifts of gold and gems with hundreds of thousands of female slaves were given to Brāhmins. When it became known to the people that the Pāndus proposed to leave them, they did every thing they could to alter their decision. In the end they saw that their entreaties and tears could not prevail, and they reluctantly submitted to the Pāndus's will. Before setting out, the Pāndus put on their forest dress of bark and leaves, and even so they seemed to put off all worldly cares.

Yudhishthira led the way out of the city. He was followed in order by Bhīma, Arjuna, the twins and Draupadi. When the Pāndus started on their journey a dog followed them.

In the course of their journey they were met by the god Agni who demanded that Arjuna should surrender his famous bow. It and the two quivers which he had got from the god Varuna were no longer required by a man whose feet were turned towards heaven. The brothers travelled east and then south, coming back by the western coasts to the neighbourhood of Dwārika now covered by the ocean. It was their desire to travel over all the earth. They then turned their steps towards the Himalayas, and having passed beyond them came

to a great desert of sand, on whose furthest verge they beheld the great Mount Meru, the home of the gods

The heroes fall down one by one As they passed through this sandy desert Draupadī suddenly fell down Bhīma asked Yudhishthira why this should have happened, seeing she had never been guilty of any sin He was told it was because she had shown partiality for Arjuna When he had said this Yudhishthira passed on, followed by his brothers and the dog In quick succession however Sahadeva, Nakula and Arjuna also fell down When questioned as to the cause Yudhishthira said that Sahadeva was proud of his wisdom, Nakula of his beauty and Arjuna of his strength Yudhishthira and Bhīma were now left alone except for the dog Not long after as they continued to travel on Bhīma too fell down, and as he fell cried out 'Why have I fallen tell me if you know it' Yudhishthira told him it was because of his gluttony and because he never thought of the wants of others in his greed

When he had uttered these words Yudhishthira resumed his journey without once looking back He was now entirely alone except for the dog Not long after Indra came in his heavenly car and told Yudhishthira to go with him to heaven The Pāṇdu replied that his brothers were lying on the ground and that he had no desire to go to the celestial regions without them When Indra said that his brothers were already in heaven and Draupadī as well Yudhishthira announced that he was willing to go on condition that the dog went with him But Indra answered that for dogs there was no place in heaven As on earth so in heaven, the presence of a dog made sacrifices unclean Yudhishthira however persisted in his refusal to go to heaven unless the dog went with him Hearing these words of the king, the dog changed his form into that of the god Dharma and declared how pleased he was with the faithfulness and devotion of the king to what seemed even the meanest of his friends Dharma further declared that he had tested him in the past and always

found him true. He would be rewarded with happiness that would never end.

Indra and Dharma with other deities and accompanied by Yudhishthira and the great⁴ rishis then mounted the celestial car and went to heaven. On their arrival there Nārada declared that Yudhishthira had excelled all the greatest of royal sages and that in reward he was permitted to enter heaven in human form. But Yudhishthira was not content. He demanded to see his brothers and Draupadi and said that if they were not heaven he would go and join them even though he had to go to hell. Heaven had no joys for him if it involved separation from those he loved.

XVIII

Book of the Ascent to Heaven

'SWARGAROHANA PARVA The five brothers and Draupadī enter heaven

Yudhishthira descends to hell When he was addressing gods and demanding to know where his brothers were, Yudhishthira chanced to see Duryodhana the most wicked of all his cousins, shining like the sun and endowed with every happiness. He blazed into sudden anger at the sight declaring that he had no desire to stay in heaven if it meant associating with men whose evil deeds had always been notorious and who had deluged the world with blood. The rishi Nārada smiling at his righteous wrath urged him to be calm. In heaven men forget their former strifes and enmities. It was true that Duryodhana had acted very badly but he had atoned for all his sins by dying in battle as a Kshatriya should.

These arguments failed to influence the angry king and he demanded to be taken without delay to where his brothers were. They were men distinguished for truth and righteousness. It did not matter where they were. Heaven for him was to be with the brothers whom he loved. The gods said that they had no desire to prevent him. He was welcome to go wherever he liked. Indra then told a celestial messenger to take Yudhishthira to the place where his brothers and Draupadī were. Alas the road along which he had to travel was very difficult and shrouded in thick darkness. On every side lay corpses that polluted the air. They were in every stage of corruption, surrounded by vultures and other birds of prey creatures with beaks of iron. High mountains he had to cross and a great river full of water as hot as fire. There were trees

whose leaves were as sharp as razors, and deserts full of burning sand. It was the land of torture ordained by the gods for sinful men. Unable to restrain his wonder any longer, Yudhishthira demanded why he was being taken by such a fearsome way. 'The celestial messenger said he had been told to take him thus far, and no farther. If he felt disposed he was welcome to retrace his steps. And so unable to endure the thick darkness, the horrid stench the frightful scenes of horror and pain any longer, Yudhishthira resolved to abandon his quest. But just as he was about to return, he was assailed by loud cries, and he heard the voices of his brothers and Draupadi, beseeching him not to leave them. Poor souls, they said that with his coming their hearts had been filled with joy. A cooling breeze had begun to blow. Let him stay but a few moments longer. They had found untold comfort in his presence. Perplexed and amazed beyond endurance, Yudhishthira began to hurl reproaches at the gods. He asked himself if he were sleeping or awake. How was it that men of sinful deeds were dwelling in heaven while his brothers and Draupadi were enduring the tortures of hell. And so turning to the messenger of the gods, he told him to go back to the gods, and tell them that Yudhishthira would stay where he was, to be a comfort and help to his brothers in their affliction. As he uttered these words, the gods headed by Indra suddenly appeared. The thick darkness vanished, the boiling river, the loathsome corpses and all the other horrid sights disappeared and Yudhishthira was praised for his loyalty and devotion. Indra said that the gods had subjected him to an illusion that they might test his constancy and faith. His brothers and Draupadi were all enjoying the happiness of heaven. He added that all men had to endure the pains of hell sooner or later. It was the custom to let bad men have a period in heaven first before sending them to reap the fruits of their evil deeds. Good men were sent to hell first and afterwards they enjoyed the bliss of heaven. It was necessary that Yudhishthira should

receive some punishment for deceiving Drona about his son Ashwatthāman¹. But now he was purged of every stain and he would dwell in Indra's own heaven, free from all disease and sorrow and pain, attended by heavenly nymphs and sharing the society of the most famous kings of old.

Thus honoured by the gods, Yudhishthira returned to heaven where he saw his brothers and Draupadī each and all of them shining like the sun. When he sought to approach Draupadī, he was told that she was the goddess of prosperity and that she had taken human form to be their help and comfort.

Their friend Krishna too they saw in his divine form, adorned with his discus and other celestial weapons. The sixteen thousand wives whom that deity enjoyed in earth had been changed into Apsarases or heavenly nymphs, and in that form dwelt in the presence of their lord.

The story of the Mahābhārata has now been told. It was recited by Vaishampāyana at the great snake sacrifice of king Janamejaya, the son of Parikshit, who was the grandson of the great warrior Arjuna. Soon after the priests brought their sacrifice to an end and to the joy of Astika the snakes were saved from further destruction. The Brāhmins were presented with numerous and costly gifts and king Janamejaya set out for Hastinapura.

It was Vyāsa the great rishi, the grandfather of the Pāndus who composed the Mahābhārata. What is not found in this book is to be found nowhere else. In all it contains sixty lakhs of verses. Of these, there are thirty lakhs in heaven, fifteen lakhs among the shades, fourteen lakhs among the Yakshas and one lakh are current among men.

This epic is equal to the Vedas. It yields merit equal to the merit of all the eighteen Purāṇas. Whatever sins a Brāhmin may commit in the watches of the night they are all washed away by reciting only a part of this poem. If you listen to

the whole of it, you will be purged of the guilt of a million crimes. You may have killed a Brāhmin, you may have been born a Chandāla, when you go to the other world you will ride in heavenly chariots and be attended by beautiful women more lovely than the moon.

Appendix I

The duty of giving gifts to Brahmins

All through the Mahabharata the duty of giving gifts to Brahmins is consistently enforced. It is nowhere perhaps so strongly urged as in the Book of Drona where the story of the sixteen kings is told to king Srngiya by the rishi Narada. Srngiya himself gave untold wealth to the Brahmins yet other kings all greater than he gave gifts still more abundantly.

In the days of king Suhotra the rivers ran with liquid gold. The gods rained down golden fishes, crabs and alligators. A thousand horse sacrifices and many other sacrifices were performed. Yet this king gave away all he had to Brahmins.

Pourava gave away one million horses at a sacrifice as well as other gifts to countless Brahmins. These gifts included a million damsels wearing ornaments of gold.

King Sinu gave to the Brahmins as many cars as there are rain drops or stars. At his sacrificial feasts there were rivers of drink and hills of food.

King Bhagiratha gave away one million damsels each riding in a chariot. Each of the million chariots was drawn by four horses and each was attended by one hundred elephants. Each elephant was decked with chains of gold. To this king's sacrifices the gods came in person. It is said that there was nothing in his possession that this king was not willing to give to Brahmins. As a reward and through the grace of the Brahmins he was raised to Brahmaloka, the highest heaven when he died.

In the palace of king Dilapa one could always hear the sound of Brahmins reciting the Vedas and the other sound—Brahmins being encouraged to receive by the words Eat Drink Enjoy.

There was Mandhatra too who was born from his father's womb as a result of his father drinking some sacrificial butter. He was honoured by getting Indra's thumb to suck immediately after he was born. Milk and butter at once began to flow from the thumb and in twelve days the child was twelve cubits high. This king conquered the whole world in a single day and gave it all away to the Brahmins. He had fishes of gold seventy miles in length. He gave them all to the Brahmins.

Yayati, an ancestor of the Pandus, took possession of all the wealth of the non-Brahmins and then handed it over to the Brahmins.

At a sacrifice celebrated by Amvaraha ten million priests were present and received as gift the kingdoms belonging to hundreds and thousands of kings.

Sasavindu had 100,000 wives and 100,000,000 sons. These sons each wore golden armour, they each performed ten million sacrifices. They were each followed by hundreds upon hundreds of cars, warriors and elephants and beautiful maidens. Each maiden again was attended by one hundred elephants and each elephant by a hundred chariots. Each of these chariots was drawn by one hundred horses, and each horse wore chains of gold. With each horse there were one thousand cows, and with each cow there were fifty goats. All these king Sasavindu gave to the Brāhmins. At a great horse sacrifice he had piles of food and sweet meats two miles high. When every body had been fed, there were thirteen piles standing untouched.

Gaya, another king, went on giving away his wealth to Brāhmins century after century. It was the boon he asked from the god Agni, to give away his wealth, every day to these holy persons. He had a wonderful altar covered with gold and studded with gems. It was 210 miles long and 286 miles high.

Ratnadeva employed 200,000 cooks, whose one business in life was to prepare food, day and night and feed the Brāhmins who came to see the king. 21,000 cows were sometimes killed in one night, to satisfy the hunger of the king's guests and even then the cooks were afraid there would not be enough food. For that reason they would go round the diners, and urge them to drink a lot of soup, as they were afraid the meat would be scarce. Once a fortnight, for an hundred years, Ratnadeva gave away all the wealth he had gathered to Brāhmins, believing that great and unending sorrow would fall upon him, if he did not do so.

Rāma of the axe, also, who killed crores of Kshatriyas and filled five lakes with their blood, gave the earth which he had conquered to Kashiya and the Brāhmins. (Book VII, Chaps 55—70)

Appendix II

The women whose sex was changed

The day before the battle began, Bhīshma explained to Duryodhana why he refused to fight with prince Sikhandin. It will be remembered that when Bhīshma had installed his younger brother Vichitravīrya as king in succession to their dead father, he went to Kāshī and carried off the three daughters of the king as brides for his brother. The two younger were duly married to the prince, but the eldest sister represented to Bhīshma that she had already chosen the king of Sālwa as her husband and begged to be set free. Bhīshma generously consented, but when the maiden went to the court of her betrothed, he refused to have

anything to do with her on the ground that she had been carried off by Bhishma. The poor girl ashamed to go home to her father's house took refuge in the forest with a number of ascetics. She looked upon Bhishma as the cause of her unhappiness and her one desire in life was to be revenged upon him. A rishi advised her to apply to Parashurama or Rama of the axe an incarnation of Vishnu then apparently living on the earth. Rama promised to kill Bhishma if he would not marry Amva as the maiden was named. He accordingly set off for Kurukshetra and sent a message to Bhishma that he wished to see him. Bhishma at once hastened to meet his old preceptor taking with him the gift of a cow. But when Rama demanded that Bhishma should marry the hapless maiden he was reminded of the vow that Bhishma had taken never to marry. Rama however insisted on the marriage taking place and said that if Bhishma did not agree he would kill him right away. As Rama was a brahmin Bhishma did his best to avoid a combat. But it could not be avoided and a great battle began between the two and lasted for many days. In the end Rama had to yield and told the maiden that he could do nothing more for her. But Amva was not content and she began to practise great austerities hoping thereby to secure the favour of Shiva the sectarian rival of Vishnu. Her austerities lasted for twelve years for one year she ate no food and only broke her fast at the end of that time by eating a single leaf for another year she stood on one leg in the waters of the river Jumna. In the end she made the heavens so hot that Shiva came to her help and promised that at her next birth he would be born as a man in the family of king Draupada when she would be able to take revenge on Bhishma. Having thus gained her object she ascended the funeral pyre looking forward to her next birth when as a man she would be able to fight with Bhishma. In due time she was born in the family of king Draupada. This prince had been led to believe as a result of penances also addressed to Shiva that the child about to be born to him would be to begin with a female but would afterwards change into a male. In view of the eventual change of sex thus promised by the god the parents resolved to treat their child from the very first as if it were a boy and everybody was under the impression that a boy it was.

In course of time Sikhandin as he or she was called was married to the daughter of a king called Dasharnaka and the young girl was duly sent to the palace of her father in law king Draupada. The bride however soon had cause to complain of her so called bridegroom and word was sent to her father of the fraud which had been played upon him and his daughter. In great indignation the angry father collected an army to invade the territory of Draupada. When she realized what had happened poor Sikhandin fled to the forest even as she had done during

her former life, when she was the hapless daughter of the king of Kāshī. In the forest she met a Yaksha, to whom she told her sad story. Taking pity on her, the Yaksha agreed to exchange her sex with her for a certain limited time. The exchange having been made, Sikhandin now changed into a man, returned to his father's place and told him all that happened in the forest. The indignant father-in-law had by this time got near the city, thirsting for revenge. He was much non-plussed when he was asked to appoint a committee of ladies with a view to investigating the charge which his daughter had made. When the committee had given in its report, Dashanaka realized that he had made a great blunder, and after staying for some days with king Draupada, went back to his own country. Not long after the great battle between the Pāndus and the Kurus began. The prince Sikhandin, now really endowed with manhood, saw the time approaching when he might hope to have his revenge on Bhīshma. He sought him everywhere in the battle, and along with Arjuna had the satisfaction of dealing his enemy a mortal blow. Bhīshma throughout the contest refused to raise sword or spear against him on the ground that if not a woman then, he had at least been born a woman, and Kshatriyas did not fight with women. (Book V, Chaps. 172-194)

Appendix III

How Death was Born

In the Diona parva we read that Vyāsa sought to comfort Yudhisthira on the death of his son Abhimanyu. When the rishi told the king that Death takes all away—gods and demons and men, he was asked whose offspring is death and why does she take creatures away. Vyāsa thereupon told a story which he had heard from the rishi Nārada. It was as follows:

Not long after the creation, the grandsire Brahmā was disappointed to discover that the men and animals he had fashioned were not subject to decay. He thought a long time over the matter but thinking only made him angry. His anger however led to very serious results, as it set the world on fire. The fire indeed spread to all the regions of the universe, and caused much excitement among both gods and men. Shiva, the god with matted locks, at last ventured to intervene. Casting himself at Brahmā's feet, he reminded him of the trouble he had taken to create and populate the world. Now these very creatures were being destroyed on all sides. Brahmā explained that he had had no intention of doing so much damage. In fact he had not intended to do any damage at all. His full intention was to leave

the world to enjoy itself in peace. But the Earth had complained that she was feeling the weight of so many creatures and had invited his assistance in lightening the load. He could think of no contrivance that would help her and in the end from very helplessness had got angry. And the result of his anger was that the world itself had gone on fire. He would be very glad to receive Shiva's assistance and advice. Shiva suggested that he should have mercy on the world that he had made and recall the anger that had issued from his heart. Brahma at once did so but even as he did so there emerged from his various organs of sense a female figure red in colour and with red eyes. As she came forth she smiled at the two gods. Brahma then addressed her by the name of Death and bade her go and kill the creatures whom he had made. When she heard this awful command the maiden began to weep. Brahma caught with his two hands her tears as they fell. The deity thought that he had persuaded her to obey but instead she fled to a forest where she began to practise unheard of austerities. She stood on one leg for 160 billions of years and again for 50 billions of years and again for 20 billions of years. She spent 100 000 billions of years with the beasts¹. She visited the Ganges the Himalayas and Pushkara lake destroying her health and reducing her body by severe asceticism. All this time she devoted her entire worship to the god Brahma and to him alone. This unbounded devotion ultimately mollified the god and he came and asked her what she wanted. Death replied that she could not reconcile herself to the horrible task which the god had appointed. All living creatures were living in health and happiness. She was afraid to commit so great a sin. Brahma replied that she would commit no sin indeed she would acquire eternal virtue by yielding obedience to his command and performing the task for which she had been created. As a concession however to her fears he promised her the assistance of the god Yama and said that her tears which he was still carrying in his two hands would be transformed into various diseases and ailments which would help her to cut short the lives of men. As a further stipulation the maiden demanded that covetousness anger malice hatred and other passions should help her to destroy the human race. When these terms had been agreed to Death promised obedience and since that time has faithfully performed the duties assigned to her by the god (Book VII Chaps 5-54)

¹ The inhabitants of the earth must live become very old before these creatures could and may dissolve of the universe ought to have taken place in the natural

Appendix IV

The Indian King Midas

Long long ago, there lived a king whose name was Singaya. One day when he was seated in his palace talking to his friends the rishis Nārada and Paivata, his daughter chanced to approach her father. The maiden was surpassingly beautiful and both the rishis were at one and the same time seized with the desire to marry such a lovely girl. Nārada however got his word in first, and much to the gratification of the king asked that the maiden should be given to him in marriage. When the offer was at once accepted, Paivata the other rishi was filled with anger and envy and told Nārada that he had taken a most unfair advantage of him. Though Nārada was the first to speak, it was quite certain that he, Paivata, had been the first to resolve that he would marry the maiden. As was not unusual with rishis, Paivata, followed up his reproaches with a curse. Nārada happened to be possessed of a very great privilege and that was that he could go to heaven whenever he liked to do so. This privilege by the curse of Paivata he was robbed of. Nārada however cleverly retaliated by declaring that Paivata would never be able to go to heaven at all except in his company. What was the issue of the curses we are not told, while further mention of Nārada's marriage is deferred to a later book in the poem, but it is said that the two rishis continued to live with Singaya as before. In any case, these sages and other Brāhmins who lived at the palace, were so pleased at the number of royal gifts which they received that they resolved to bestow the boon of a son upon the king and told him to ask for any kind of son he pleased. It was a strange kind of son the king asked for. That he should be famous, full of glory and the subduer of his foes, these were usual requests and he asked for these things, but he also made the strange request that his son's urine and excreta, secretions and perspirations should all be of gold. When the son was born a very shower of wealth seemed to descend upon the king. Every thing that he possessed was made of gold, even the walls of his fortresses and of his palaces, the houses of the Brāhmins, his beds and other furniture, everything even in the kitchen was made of gold.

But all this wealth alas! excited the cupidity of certain thieves, and they resolved to get possession of the hapless child. Not unreasonably they thought that the boy himself was a veritable gold mine. And so when they had got him into their hands, they killed him and cut him to pieces. But when they had opened his body, they found no gold there. They had slain

the child to no purpose and were themselves cast down into the deepest and most awful hell

It was to comfort King Śrīrāyā on the loss of his son that Narada told him the story of the sixteen kings which has been already given in Appendix No. 1. It should be added that Narada eventually restored the young prince to life. The reasons given for this restoration were that the youth had performed no sacrifices, had begotten no son, and had not died in battle as a Kshatriya should. (Book VII Chaps 55-1)

Appendix V

Vishnu, Shiva's Arrow, and Brahma his Charioteer

As an illustration of the symbolical meaning which it is sometimes possible to find in the stories of the *Mahābhārata* the following may be given.

The three sons of the Daitya Tāraka, after one of their many defeats at the hands of the gods, resolved to give themselves up to asceticism, presumably as a surer way of obtaining victory. Their asceticism as was always the case, brought Brahmā to their side to ask what boon they craved. When they asked that they should never die at the hands of any creature Brahmā, for once, told them that they were making an impossible demand, as there was no such thing as freedom from mortality for gods or men. And so he bade them ask another boon. They at once put forward another request. It was that they might build three cities, each separate from the other, and that they, the three brothers, should not die until some celestial succeeded in piercing these three cities with a single arrow. This was a request that Brahmā considered to be within the bounds of reason, and he at once granted them their boon. The three brothers thereupon began to build three cities with the assistance of Māyā, the architect of the demons. The first city was of gold, and its foundation was in heaven. The second was of silver, and was suspended in the sky. The third was a city of iron, and it was established upon the earth. Each of these cities was 700 miles long, and as many miles in breadth. They had lofty buildings and wide streets. The three brothers each chose a city to dwell in, and at once began a relentless war against gods and men. They secured too, it is said, another boon from Brahmā, that if they dipped their wounded and slaughtered followers in a lake which lay within their city of gold, both dead and wounded would be revived. The god Indra and the Maruts fought for long against these cities in vain, and many a single arrow was sped

in the hope that it would be able to pierce the three. In the end, with Brahmā as the head of their deputation, gods and rishis went to see Shiva, and invited him to come to the rescue. They sang his praises and exalted his greatness, until Shiva, very much gratified, told them he would accomplish what they desired. But they must all give him their assistance in not only fashioning a chariot but by placing themselves at his disposal in the creation of it. And so the different deities, the Vedas, the sacred letters OM, Time and Speech, the Sun and Moon, the Twilight hours, Virtue, Profit and Desire, Mount Mandara and the Ganges, were all used in the shaping of the car. Brahmā himself was appointed to act as charioteer, while Vishnu and Agni were made the fatal shaft which was to pierce the three cities and cause the destruction of their demon foes. The car, when it was fashioned, was so heavy that it began to sink into the earth. Vishnu, however, came out of the arrow in which he had embodied himself, and extracted the sinking chariot.

Now that every thing was ready, their work was as good as done. Shiva mounted his car, with Brahmā as his charioteer, and brandishing in the air his wondrous arrow to which Vishnu had returned, he advanced against the three cities of the demons, founded as they were in heaven, in the firmament and on the earth. It is needless to add that when Shiva shot his bolt, it penetrated the three cities and the luckless boon granted by Brahmā was dissolved. The cities at once burst into flames and all their demon inhabitants, along with the three sons of Tāraka, were destroyed. (Book VIII, Chaps 33-34)

Appendix VI

King Shivi, the Hawk and the Pigeon

One day a beautiful pigeon came seeking protection from the royal sage Shivi. It was pursued by a hawk. The king took the pigeon to his breast and assured him that he need have no fear. He would surrender his kingdom of Benares, even life itself, before he refused to answer the cry of a suppliant. The hawk, however, had by this time arrived on the scene and demanded to know by what right the king stood between him and his lawful prey. It was an ordinance of the universe that pigeons were to be the food of hawks. Kings had authority over men and kingdoms and it was their business to protect and shelter them. He denied that an earthly king had any jurisdiction over the air and its inhabitants. The king however refused to abandon the pledge he had given, and declared that he would never forsake the sacred rule of listening to the cry of those who

had sought his protection. He offered to supply the hawk with any other food he chose. He would cause a bull, a deer, a buffalo, a boar to be got ready for him at once. He could satisfy his hunger with any one of them he liked. But he would not give up the pigeon. To this proposal the hawk would not listen. It was only the flesh and blood of pigeons that could satisfy his hunger and thirst. But he added, 'If you must keep your pledge and are so full of pity for the pigeon, I am willing to accept yourself as the pigeon's substitute. Surrender to me as much of your own flesh as will equal the weight of the pigeon.' To this the king answered that he would be very glad to do so. Indeed he looked upon the hawk's proposal as equal to the conferring of a favour. He thereupon began to cut off portions of his own flesh which he placed in a balance and weighed against the pigeon. The king's action soon became known to his queen, to his ministers and attendants, and the whole palace was filled with the sound of lamentation. Nature too joined in the distress. The earth trembled and clouds darkened the sky. But the noble king went on hacking flesh from his breast and sides, his legs and arms and casting it into the scale. The scale containing the pigeon however continued to weigh the heavier. When at last he had cast all his flesh into the balance, and there was nothing left of him except bones, he made the supreme sacrifice and himself stepped into the scale.

This heroic deed excited so much wonder in heaven that all the gods, with Indra at their head, came to behold. The drums of heaven began to beat, while nectar bathed the limbs and garlands crowned the head of the royal sage. The god too, along with the Gandharvas and Apsarises began to dance and sing around the hero, just as they are wont to do in the presence of Brahma, their grandsire. At this stage a celestial car appeared and carried Shiva off to heaven. If any one reads this story, he will be purged of every sin.

This is the story of King Shiva as recorded in the 3rd chapter of Book VIII. It was told to Yudhisthira by Bhishma in reply to a question regarding one's duty to suppliants. But as a proof of its great popularity, we find it told twice in Book III with considerable variations but sometimes given in the same words. The earlier narrative in both its versions says that Indra came as a hawk and Agni as a pigeon to test the virtue of Shiva. On one occasion the rishi Lomasha tells the story. On the other Markandeya. In neither story is there any mention of heavenly witnesses, but in the earlier story the hawk explains that he is Indra and congratulates the king on his self-denying act, while in the second version of Book III the hawk cries out 'Saved! Saved!' and disappears. It is left to the pigeon to explain that he and the hawk were indeed the gods Agni and Indra.

In a succeeding chapter the ṛishi Nārada declares that even he himself is not the equal of Shivi in virtue and piety. When asked to explain, he told how at the request of a Brāhmin, Shivi had caused his own son to be killed and cooked for the Brāhmin's food. Without demur the king did as he was told, had his son killed and cooked and set before the Brāhmin. Not only so, but when the Brāhmin bade him eat some of his own son's flesh, he proceeded to do so. Fortunately the Brāhmin stopped him in time, and heartily congratulated him for his extraordinary piety in not refusing any request of a Brāhmin. It is satisfactory to be able to add that the Brāhmin not only worshipped Shivi, but restored his son to life. It is said that the Brāhmin who worshipped Shivi, was no less a person than the god Brahmā himself.

Note 1

The Epic Priest

It is possible that some of these stories have been told with a view to disparaging the priestly class as a whole. Their enemies did undoubtedly have a share in the writing of the poem and we find that some hard things are said and that of set purpose about the ascetic and the priest. Their officiousness and greed are freely spoken of at least in certain sections of the poem and they are reminded that a beggar's bowl and clothes of bark do not make a man a saint. One is afraid however that the compilers of the poem had no such lofty purpose. The Mahabharata is famous for its catholicity of view and has gathered into its net all kinds of teaching good and bad. The opinion of Mr Hopkins who probably knows the Mahabharata better than any body else may be quoted. Such an ascetic has no ordinary rules of morality. In fact his practices are most peculiar for to seduce young women is one of his commonest occupations and in his anger to cause an injury to his foes is one of the ends for which he toils. The gods are nothing to him. They are puppets whom he makes shake and tremble at will. As portrayed in the Epic in terms of common sense the Muni (silent saint) is a morose and very vulgar minded old man who seeks to intimidate others by a show of miraculous power. The greed and rapacity of the priest exceeds all imaginable limits. He takes whatever he can get and asks for more. He has by his own showing scarcely one estimable trait. Avarice, cupidity, sensuality, gluttony, love of finery, effeminacy, meanness and pride—every thing charged against him by the Buddhist—are his most marked characteristics. But one would err if he thus dismissed them all. There were others who had no preferment who lived in quiet content in their own houses and deserved none of the opprobrium rightly bestowed upon their hypocritical brothers. The hermits too appear to have been a mild and inoffensive race not presuming too much on their caste privileges. There were doubtless good and bad priests but the peculiarity of the epic priest rapacious and lustful is that he glories in his sins. Hopkins *Religions of India* pp 35 -3

Note 2

The Four Ages of the World'

Professor Dowson says that this elaborate and practically boundless system of chronology was invented between the age of the Rīg Veda and that of the Mahābhārata, as there is no trace of it to be found in the hymns of the earlier work

The Kṛta Yuga lasted for	1,728,000 years
The Tretā Yuga "	1,296,000 "
The Dwāpāra Yuga "	864,000 "
The Kali Yuga will last for	132,000 "

Total . 4,320,000 years

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This total is called a Mahā Yuga or Manwantara. Two thousand Mahā Yugas or 8,640,000,000 years make one Kalpa or a night and a day of Brahmā.

It is said in Book XII that during its many stages, a soul may have to suffer in hell for many thousands of Kalpas. Until the soul obtains emancipation heaven is just a sort of hell, because even in heaven no one can live for ever. The wheel of existence must endlessly revolve for every one, gods and men, except the soul that has become free.

The world when once created lasts for a day of Brahmā, that is for 4,320,000,000 years, or half a Kalpa. At the end of that time, it is dissolved in fire, everything being destroyed except the elements, the gods and the rishis. Brahmā then goes to sleep for a night of Brahmā, another period of 4,320,000,000 years, when he awakes to create the world anew. We are living in the seventh cycle of this creation, or as it is called, the seventh birth of Brahmā (Book XII, Chapter 349, see page 181). In Book III Hanumān describes to Bhīma, the character of the different Yugas (see page 83). The ideal character of the first two ages, as described by Hanumān hardly agrees with the stories of the contests between the gods and the demons, which are recorded as having happened then. Compare Mārkaṇdeya's description of the dissolution of the universe, and his stay in the stomach of Vishnu. He says that at that time the gods also were destroyed (p. 38).

Note 3

Prajapati, the Prajapatis and the Rishis

The epithet Prajapati or Lord of creatures is applied in the Vedas to a number of gods. Sometimes however a particular deity is addressed under that name and he is thought of as the creator the giver of children and cattle.

In the Mahabharata the Adi parva speaks of Daksha the son of Brahma as Prajapati while the same book tells us that Brahma had a grandson of that name. But Brahma also is identified with Prajapati as the Creator while his mind born sons the great Rishis are also called the Prajapatis. As these Rishis are said to be the progenitors of all living creatures it is to them that the name is usually given and Brahma is made to occupy the first place among them.

These Rishis are variously spoken of as numbering seven, ten and twenty-one.

In Book I Chapter 65 it is said that Brahma had six mind born sons Marichi Atri Angiras Pulastya Pulaha and Kratu.

Daksha was seventh son but he was born from the right toe of Brahma and his wife from the left toe. The same chapter mentions four more Sthanu and Manu Dharmā and Bhrigu. How the two former came into being is not stated but the two latter sprang from Brahma's breast.

Information is given as to the descendants of these sons of Brahma.

Marichi had a son called Kashyapa. He is very frequently referred to in the Mahabharata. All creatures including celestials and demons have sprung from him. He married two of the daughters of Daksha and by them was the father of Garuda and the snake race. See page 76.

Atri it is said had sons without number. Every one of them became great rishis deeply versed in the Vedas. He was also the ancestor of the Lunar Race.

Angiras had a son called Brihaspati who appears in the epic as the priest of the gods. He was later identified with the planet Jupiter and his name is given to Thursday one of the days of the week. The story of his son Kacha and how he became a pupil of Shukra is given at page 3 of this book.

Pulastya was the progenitor of demons and monkeys. He was the grandfather of Kuvera the god of wealth and of Ravana who carried off Sita.

Pulaha's descendants are tigers lions and bears.

Daksha had many daughters. One was called Aditi. She was

the mother of the twelve Adityas. These twelve include Vishnu, the youngest and the best. Another daughter was Diti, the grandmother of Prahlāda to avenge whose wrongs Vishnu became incarnate as the man-lion. His most illustrious daughter, however, was Umā, the wife of Shiva. In a former birth, she bore the name of Satī. Under that name she entered the fire to show her devotion to her husband, and thus became the first of Satīs. Still another of Daksha's daughters was Danu, the grandmother of Rāhu the enemy of the sun and moon, and the mother of the Dānavas.

Bhrigu, born from the breast of Brahmā, had a son called Shukra. This Shukra was a poet, and was well versed in the Yoga philosophy. He acted as instructor to both the gods and the demons. He is however usually represented as the priest of the demons. He afterwards became a planet, the planet, Venus of West. The Hindu Friday bears his name. Shukra had a daughter married to Yayāti of the Lunar race, an ancestor of the Pāndus.

The story of Manu and the flood as given in the Third Book only speaks of seven Rishis as being saved from the deluge along with Manu. This is the number usually spoken of, at the present day in India. These seven rishis are represented in the sky by the seven stars of the constellation of the Great Bear. The Mahābhārata sometimes adds the name of Vasishtha to the six mind-born sons of Brahmā to make up the seven, but as will be seen from the above Manu, Bhrigu and Daksha have all a greater claim. In any case, the Mahābhārata makes no claim to consistency in this as in other matters of much greater importance.

It will be remembered that the term rishi is frequently applied to learned ascetics in general, though the title more correctly belongs to the inspired poets who wrote the Vedas.

Note 4

The Lunar Race

Ati, one of the mind-born sons of Brahmā was the progenitor of the Lunar Race, to which the Pāndus, the Kurus and Krishna belonged. It was his son Chandra or the moon, however, who gave his name to their descendants. It will be a help to the reader to study the following outline. There were many generations and only some of the more prominent names are

Pāṇdu was not the father of Yudhishthira and his four brothers. Their mothers Kuntī and Mādri had a charm by which they could call the gods to their side. Kuntī had another son Karna, whose father was Surya, the sun god.

As is well known, Rāma the incarnation of Viṣṇu is said to have belonged to the Solar Race. His father Dasaratha was king of Ayodhyā. The Solar race, traces its descent from Ikshvāku a grandson of the sun. Ikshvāku's father was Manu Vaivaswata (sun-born) the Manu of this present or seventh age, who was saved at the deluge, along with the seven rishis, by Viṣṇu in his Fish-incarnation. Many Rajputs claim to belong to either the Lunar or the Solar race.

Note 5

Vasishtha and Agastya

As has been said in note 3, Vasiṣṭha is sometimes termed one of the Prajāpatis, as sprung from Brahmanā, but he and Agastya are declared in the Rig-Veda and the Epic to be sons of the gods Mitra and Varuna, by a process of birth similar to that referred to on page 31. Vasiṣṭha was the possessor of the 'cow of plenty', which had the power of granting all that he desired (see pages 36, 46). The royal sage Viṣhwāmitra tried to steal the cow. Many stories are told of the rivalries between these two famous persons.

Agastya was remarkable for his powers of digestion, p. 76

Note 6

Durvasa

Durvāsa was a son of Ati, the mind-born son of Brahmanā (see note 3). He had a very hasty temper and many persons suffered from his curses. It was his curse that separated Shakuntalā from her husband. It was his curse that so weakened India (in his age long contests with the demons) that the gods had to churn the Ocean and thereby obtain Amrit, with a view to renewing their strength.

Book XVI of the Mahābhārata states that on one occasion when Krishna was entertaining Durvāsa he omitted to wipe off some fragments of food which had fallen on the foot of the sage. For this neglect, Krishna was cursed to die from a wound on the foot,

The Vishnu Purāṇa says that Durvasa himself acknowledged that his nature was a stranger to remorse. Kunti however seemed to have been able to obtain his good graces (page 37)

In view of the fact that rishis like Durvasa were grandsons of Brahma and were born in the Krita Yuga or first age of the world they must have been several millions of years old in the days of Krishna and the Pandus

Note 7

Drinking Customs

Judging by the number of references the practice of drinking intoxicating liquors would seem to have been prevalent among the race of Krishna

We are told in Book 1 Chapter 21 that Krishna's brother Balarama who shared in the divinity of Vishnu and Krishna's son Shamva were both intoxicated at a great festival. The following chapter tells the incident referred to in the text of the princes of Dwarka seated on a thousand thrones their eyes inflamed with wine. Both Drupadi the wife of the Pandus and Subhadra Krishna's sister were so intoxicated at a picnic that they gave away costly presents to the ladies in their company

Of these ladies it is also said that they became unsteady in their gait obstructed one another's progress and even fought. The great slaughter of the Yadus or race of Krishna described in the XVIth Book was brought about by drunkenness. Fearing what would happen the princes of Dwarka made a proclamation that no one should manufacture wines and intoxicating liquors of any kind and that whoever secretly manufactured them would be impaled alive with all his kinsmen (Book 16 Chapter 1) In the Forest Book (Book 3 Chapter 15) Krishna tells that when Dwarka was being attacked by its enemies Ugrasena to prevent carelessness and avoid danger gave an order that no one should drink liquor. All actors singers and dancers were driven out of the country

Krishna also declares in the Third Book Chapter 13 that women gambling hunting and drinking are the four great evils. Apropos of Yudhishthira's love of gambling he says that gambling is the greatest of the four

In Book I Chap 11 it is said that at a certain sacrifice Indra was so intoxicated with wine that the other gods and some rishis had to conduct it all by themselves. Indra was famous for his indulgence in liquor. He is called Madhupriya the lover of Madhu and Somapa the drinker of Soma. Madhu was a spirituous liquor distilled from the flowers of a particular plant. Soma is the liquor so often praised in the Rig Veda. The story

of Shukra, the priest of the demons (p. 33) should also be noted, and the curse he pronounced against any Brāhmin who should drink liquor from that day. He declared that the drinking of intoxicants would be considered as great a sin as the killing of a Brāhmin. And apart from the illustrations we have given above that is the teaching of the epic as a whole.

The Udyoga Parva Book V, Chap. 35 declares that a seller of wine is on a par with an atheist and the man who poisons cattle, while the Book of Consolation and the Book of Precepts, constantly enforce the duty of abstinence. Passages however do occur which seem to hark back to an earlier view of things. Nārada for instance in his story of the sixteen kings (Book VII, Chap. 64) tells of men drinking various kinds of intoxicating liquors for the sake of the pleasures they produced. They were perfectly intoxicated, sang songs, greatly delighted, while some reeled on the ground. The same book (Chap. 112) says that in the great battle the warriors gave their horses juicy and intoxicating liquor to refresh and reinvigorate them. When Vishvāmitra defended his action in eating dog's flesh, during a famine, he said the rule forbidding the use of intoxicants was only an ordinal precept (Book XII, Chap. 741).

Note 8

The Rishi Narada

Nārada plays a great part in the *Mahābhārata*. The references to his origin however are neither clear nor consistent. It is said that he is the author of some of the hymns in the I Veda. He is spoken of as one of the Prajāpatis, and sometimes included among the seven great Rishis.

The Rīg Veda says he belonged to the family of Kanwa, the rishi who brought up Shakuntalā when she was abandoned by her parents. The Vishnu Purāṇa says he was a son of Kashyapa, who was the son of Marichi, the mind-born son of Brahmā, and that his mother was one of Daksha's many daughters. Another statement is to the effect that he was born from the blow of Brahmā.

He is represented in the *Mahābhārata* as constantly passing between earth and heaven. He acquired the nick names of the 'messenger or spy,' and the 'strife maker'. In Book IX, Chap. 54 it is said that he was a creator of quarrels, and always fond of strife. He was also called the monkey-faced. He was able to visit heaven whenever he liked, without let or hindrance. He was deprived of this privilege by the curse of a brother rishi.

(Book VII Chap 55) Brahma once cursed Narada to lead a life of dissipation. Narada replied by condemning Brahma to lust after his own daughter and to be unworthy of the worship of men

Note 9

The Discussion between Draupadi and Yudhishthira

For a summary of this interesting discussion between Draupadi and Yudhishthira the reader is referred to pages 208 of Muir's *Metrical Translations from Sanskrit Writers* and pages 384-387 of Hopkins' *The Religions of India*. The latter says that it is by far the most interesting theological discussion in the Epic. The very fact that a woman is the disputant gives an archaic effect to the narration and reminds one of the scenes in the Upanishads where learned women cope successfully with men in displays of theological acumen. Further more the theological position taken the absence of Vishnuism the appeal to the Creator as the highest power takes one back to a former age. The doctrine of special grace which crops out in the Upanishads here receives its exposure by a sudden claim that the converse of the theory must also be true viz that to those not saved by grace and election God is as cruel as He is kind to the elect.

The passage may be read in full in Mr Dutt's English translation of the *Mahabharata* (Book III Chaps 27-36)

Note 10

Rakshasas and Yakshas

The Rakshasas were goblins or evil spirits. They are sometimes spoken of as comparatively harmless but as a rule they are looked upon as the enemies of the gods disturbing sacrifices attacking and devouring men and causing all sorts of evil and calamity. They were the descendants of Pulastya one of the mind born sons of Brahma. According to the *Pāmāyana* they were of all shapes and sizes. Some were very ugly others were very beautiful. Their hostility to the gods did not prevent them from engaging in ascetic rites to achieve their purposes and they were thus very frequently able to compel the gods to do their bidding.

The Yakshas were an inoffensive race of supernatural beings attendants of Kuber the god of wealth. It is difficult to say how they originated.

Note 11

The Asuras, Daityas and Danavas

Asura, means 'divine' In the oldest part of the Rīg Veda, the term is used for the supreme spirit, and is applied to several of the gods (See Dowson's *Hindu Mythology*). In the *Mahābhārata* the word is used for the demons or enemies of the gods, but one interesting passage tells us that originally the Asuras were the gods, while according to another derivation 'Sura' came to mean god, and 'a' the negative prefix being employed, Asura thus came to mean 'not a god'. The epic uses the two words in this sense and speaks of Suras and Asuras, gods and demons

The word Asuras is therefore applied in the poem to the enemies of the gods, with whom they waged unending war They include the Daityas and Dānavas, the descendants of Kashyapa, a grandson of Brahmā

Note 12

Manu

As stated in Note 2 the total of 4,320,000 years, or the four ages taken together is called a Manwantara, Manu-antara, or cycle of Manu It is said that seven of these cycles have already come into existence each of them ruled over by a person called Manu The Manu of the present age is Manu Vaivasvata the sun-born. It is of him that the story of the flood is related in the *Forest Book*. He was given the task of creating gods, demons and men, as well as things moveable and immoveable, in view of the fact that the deluge had destroyed every living thing

In the Shānti-parva (c. 348) we have a description of the seven births of the Universe, which have so far occurred

The first of these Manus, is called Manu Swāyambhuva He originated from Swayam-bhū, the self-existent It is said that Swayam-bhū, here identified with Brahmā the Creator, divided himself into two persons, male and female From this couple were born the male Virāj, and from Virāj was born the first Manu As stated above, the Manu of the present cycle was born from the sun, but on the other hand, we read in the first book of the Epic that he was the son of Brahmā (See *Laws of Manu*, Chap. 1)

There have been or will be fourteen Manus in all This is a very modest chronological calculation, compared with the statement found elsewhere that 2000 Manwantaras or cycles of Manu make one Kalpa and that a single soul may have to endure thousands of Kālpas in hell

Note 13

Gandharvas and Apsarases

The Gandharva of the Veda says Dowson was a deity who knew and revealed the secrets of heaven and divine truths in general. In the *Mahābhārata* he is a sort of heavenly attendant who helps to pass the time with dance and song. They are always spoken of in connexion with Indra's heaven a place according to the epic where gods and men were able to indulge themselves as much as they liked.

The Apsarases are the celestial nymphs and they also are connected with Indra's heaven. They are referred to in the Vedas. They are said to have been produced at the churning of the Ocean. When they came out of the sea neither gods nor demons would have them as wives and they thus became common to all. They were as the *Mahābhārata* shows persons of easy virtue. The Forest Book tells how Indra sent one of them called Urvashi to be at the disposal of Arjuna. The Pandu rejected her advance despite the fact that the nymph declared that all his ancestors dwelling in Indra's heaven Urvashi enjoyed such favours without reproach.

Note 14

The Bhagavadgita

No attempt has been made to give a summary of this philosophic poem. It ought to be read in full.

The Sanatsugatiya and the Anugita two other poems of the same order are given in the Udyoga and the Aśvamedha Books. These three poems are published in vol. VIII of the *Sacred Books of the East* translated by Mr. K. T. Telang.

Note 15

Nara-Narayana

All the eighteen books of the *Mahābhārata* begin with a salutation to the Supreme Deity Narayana and the highest of all male beings Nara. The poem repeatedly declares that Krishna is Narayana and that Arjuna is Nara. When Krishna and Arjuna went to Shiva's heaven to secure his help against the Kurus that god addressed them as Nara Narayana the two foremost of men. (See p. 119). Thus probably is a passage

intended to exalt the greatness of Shiva, but it also refers to a fact, namely that there were two famous and ancient rivers of that name (Book VII, c 80) The wondrous boy in whose stomach Mārkaṇḍeya lived for hundreds of years, declared that he was called Nārāyaṇa, because the waters (nāṛā) were his abode (ayana) The boy was Viṣṇu himself, though he said that he was Brahmā and Indira as well, indeed the source of all things, the Creator and destroyer of all (Book III, c 189.)

The Drona Parva has a passage which declares in strange contrast to c 80 of the same book, that Nārāyaṇa is the father of Nara, and that Nārāyaṇa is Viṣṇu or Kṛṣṇa, and that Nara is Arjuna (Book VII, c 202)

Professor Dowson, says that Nārāyaṇa is also spoken of as the son of Nara As a whole the *Mahābhārata*, speaks of them together in the strange partnership, referred to at the beginning of this note

It should be remembered that Brahmā the creator, is also called Nārāyaṇa, as in the *Rāmāyaṇa*, which speaks of him rising from the waters to re-create the world. Some of the works and attributes of Brahmā were however transferred to Viṣṇu, when the influence of Brahmā decayed. Incarnations like that of the boar and the tortoise were formerly attributed to Prajāpati or Brahmā

Note 16

The Exaggerations in the Mahabharata

Much might be written on the exaggerated statements of the *Mahābhārata* The following illustrations will perhaps suffice

- 1 The walls of the city of Indraprastha were as high as Mount Mandara, which was 77,000 miles high
- 2 Ghatotkacha, the Rākṣasa son of Bhīma, had an aiship which was four miles long and four miles broad He was of so huge a size, that when he fell in battle, he crushed to death a whole division of the Kuru army containing more than 20,000 cars, more than 20,000 elephants, 65,000 cavalry and nearly 170,000 infantry (Book VII, c 180)
- 3 In the battle of Kurukshetra 1660 millions of men were slain (Book XI, c 26)
- 4 During the battle, Karna's chariot stuck fast in the earth He got out and tried to raise it He succeeded in raising it, but with the chariot he raised the earth itself with its seven continents and seven seas to a height of four cubits (Book III, c 90)

Note 17

, The Sankhya and The Yoga

In treating of the topics or principles of the Sankhya philosophy this book more frequently refers to the well known twenty four. These twenty four topics are (1) The unmanifest (Prakriti) (2) Greatness (Intellect Buddhi) (3) Consciousness (Egoism Ahankara) (4) Earth (5) Ether, (6) Air (7) Water and (8) Fire, the rest are called modifications (9) ear (10) skin (11) eye (12) tongue, and (13) nose (14) sound (15) touch (16) colour (17) taste and (18) smell (19) the mouth (20) the hands (21) the feet (22) and (23) the two organs of excretion and (24) the mind (manas the internal organ of perception volition and action). Then comes the Soul which is the twenty fifth. These constitute the twenty five topics or principles of the Sankhya philosophy. It is said that the Soul is above all things and when one is endowed with the twenty four one is called by the name of Jiva or individual Soul.

There is no place for God in the Sankhya system. It asserts the eternity of matter Prakriti or the unmanifest but alongside of that it believes in the existence of an infinite number of individual souls which are also eternal.

Prakriti means that which evolves or produces everything else. It consists of or contains the three qualities (gunas) of Sattva Rajas and Tamas (goodness passion or activity and darkness or ignorance). When these three qualities are in equilibrium creation is not possible. But when the individual soul approaches Prakriti the equilibrium is disturbed and the work of creation begins.

As the original World Evolver only evolves the world for the sake of the spectator soul this is practically an admission that there can be no realization of creation without the union of Prakriti with Purusha the personal soul. In all probability Kapila's own idea was that every Purusha though he did not himself create had his own creation and his own created universe comprehended in his own person.¹

Bhishma tells Yudhishthira when asked to explain the difference between the Sankhya and Yoga systems of philosophy that the follower of each praised his own system though the Yogins put forward very good reasons for showing that one who did not believe in the existence of God could not achieve liberation. For himself Bhishma approved of both (see page 176). We also find Vyasa after giving a description of the Sankhya and the Yoga systems declare that they are only dissimilar if the speaker be disposed to treat them as such (VII 35). The explanation

¹ Monier Williams *Indian Wisdom* p 89

of these two observations, as well as many others, is to be found in the fact that the adherents of the Yôga sought to amalgamate the philosophy of the Sāṅkhya with their own system. In c 308 of Book XII for instance we are told that in the Sāṅkhya system, no topic above the twenty-five is admitted. Nevertheless, the very next chapter proceeds to declare that there is a twenty-sixth principle, and this twenty-sixth principle is Ishwara, a personal God, whom the Sāṅkhya system has just denied or at least ignored.

Apart from its association with the Sāṅkhya the system of Yôga has no claim to be called a scheme of philosophy. Its object is to achieve liberation or union with the supreme. The Yôgin insists on asceticism, the fixing of the eyes on the tip of the nose, the regulation of the breath, the suppression of the passions, the repeating of the mystic syllable OM, above all, achieving the condition in which one thinks of nothing at all. The *Mahābhārata* has given us many proofs of what wonderful things can be achieved by the practice of Yôga.

In alliance with the Sāṅkhya, however, it was able, having asserted a twenty-sixth principle or God, to offer a philosophic system, in which the cravings of men's spiritual natures would find rest.

It is not possible to reduce the summary of Yôga and Sāṅkhya, which has been given in connexion with the twelfth book to anything at all consistent. The chapters devoted to the doctrine of Renunciation contain the most divergent teaching. They contain the speculations of many different persons written at different times. The pantheistic teaching also of the Vedānta is not absent, as well as the doctrine of Bhakti or devotion to and faith in one God, who is thought of as the supreme. As has been well said by Monier Williams the threads of all these systems are to be found in the Bhagavadgītā. It is with the teaching of the Vedānta that the Book of Consolation ends. 'The Supreme Soul lives in all. Indeed one ought to say that there is but one soul. Because he is the Knower and the Known, the thinker and the thing thought, the eater and the food that is eaten. He is Nature (Pradhāna) that lasts for ever, and without change. Of Bhakti or the religion of devotion to one Supreme Being, we are told it is the primeval, and eternal religion and that it now prevails throughout the world.'

For a very full and interesting discussion of the whole subject, the reader is referred to the chapter on 'Epic Philosophy' in Hopkins' book, *The Great Epic of India*, pp 85-190.

Note 18

The Vedas

The writers of the *Mahābhārata* make many references to the Vedas. This general name however is made to include three very distinct component parts very far removed from one another in time as well as in thought.

I. There are first the Hymns, the Vedas proper. These hymns also vary greatly in age and purpose. They are (a) The Rig Veda Sanhita the oldest and to a very large extent the source from which the later collections of hymns were drawn. It is essentially a book of praise addressed to the nature gods of the early Aryans. (b) The Sama Veda almost entirely composed of hymns drawn from the Rig Veda. It was compiled for the use of priests at the great Soma sacrifice. (c) The Yajur Veda. It also though not to so great an extent is based on the Rig Veda and was used by the priests who performed not only the Soma sacrifices but others as well.

These are the three Vedas of which the *Mahābhārata* so often speaks. They were in existence and recognized as revelation long before (d) the Atharva Veda had been recognized or compiled. The Atharva Veda says Professor Macdonell only attained its present position after a long struggle. In spirit it is not only entirely different from the Rig Veda but though a later compilation it represents a much more primitive stage of thought. It is a hand book of spells and curings. It has to do with the gods of the lower world and not with the kindly gods of the Rig Veda who are expected to bless their worshippers with children and cattle health and happiness and length of days.

The Vedic period is believed to have begun as early as 1500 B.C. and the Rig Veda Sanhita to have largely taken its present shape by 1000 B.C.

II. The second portion of the Vedas are the Brahmanas written in prose. Their purpose is to explain the significance of the sacrificial ritual. These explanations however do not stand alone. The Brahmanas also contain a large number of legends and for that reason are of great value as showing the changes that took place in the religious beliefs of the people of India.

It should be noted that the four sets of hymns have their corresponding Brahmanas while the dates assigned to them range from 800 to 500 B.C.

As a help to the student of the Mahābhārata the following facts may be noted regarding the Brāhmanas.

- (1) The power of sacrifice has already become so great that the sacrificer is able to bend the gods to his will
- (2) The gods were created and only obtained immortality by means of austerities. They are already afraid of demons and other evil spirits, they only speak to the upper castes, they are lovers of wine and women, Indra has become noted for his low morals and is spoken of as the adulterous lover of Ahalyā
- (3) Prajāpati, the lord of Creatures, identified at a later time with Brahma, is usually spoken of as the creator of the world, gods and men. But he is also said to have been created by the gods. It should be noted, however, that Brahma (neuter) the self-existent is called the creator in the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa. 'In the beginning Brahma was this 'Universe. He created gods and placed them in this world'
- (4) There are only a few references to Viṣṇu. He is called the sacrifice and is said to have got his power by striding. This has reference to the Dwarf Incarnation, and it is said that Viṣṇu was the Dwarf. Prajāpati gets the credit of both the Boar and Tortoise Incarnations attributed in later times to Viṣṇu.

The story of the Deluge is given in the Shatapatha Brāhmaṇa, but the Fish that saves Manu is not identified with any deity, while Manu alone is mentioned and no reference is made to the seven Rishis.¹ Manu thus saved from destruction, by means of austerities created a woman, through whom the empty world was repopled. This story also is silent regarding the various dissolutions of the universe and the long periods of time, so prominent in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Purāṇas*.

Krishna is spoken of as a student, eager in the search for knowledge, but no hint is given of the divinity he afterwards acquired.

- (5) There is a reference to a deity called Ishana or Mahādeva, but the name Shiva does not occur.
- (6) The Brāhmanas do not speak of Transmigration or of Nirvāṇa, doctrines which arose in the ferment which produced Buddhism.
- (7) There is a great deal of information, both descriptive and legendary, regarding human sacrifices as well as those of the horse and the cow.

III The Upanishads are reckoned as the third and final portion of the Vedas hence the name which is sometimes given to them Vedanta or end of the Vedas The pantheistic groundwork of their doctrines was later developed into the Vedanta system which is still the favourite philosophy of the modern Hindus

They really represent a new religion which is in opposition to the ritual or practical side (Karma Kanda) Their aim is no longer the obtaining of earthly happiness and afterwards bliss in the abode of Yama by sacrificing correctly to the gods but release from mundane existence by the absorption of the individual soul in the world soul through correct knowledge Here therefore the sacrificial ceremonial has become useless and speculative knowledge all important The essential theme of the Upanishads is the nature of the world soul (Macdonell's *Sanskrit Literature* p. 18)

With the acceptance of pantheism and the belief that correct knowledge was the key to union with the world soul went the theory of transmigration which according to the above quoted authority is to be found in the oldest Upanishads

The twelfth and thirteenth books of the *Mahābhārata* reveal the severity of the contest that prevailed between these very conflicting ideas which had taken possession of Hinduism They also show the attempts that were made to reconcile them No wonder the sincere and simple minded Yudhisthira was forced to think that the Vedas were very conflicting in their teaching

The Upanishads probably began to be written about 600 B.C. Some of them are very late There is even a Mohammedan treatise which claims the name The three portions of the Vedas are all declared to be Revelation (Shruti) in contrast to other and later books which are termed Tradition (Smṛti)

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INDEX

- Abhimanyu son of Arjuna 52
100 118 202 210
- Acts their fruit and power 15
4 105 146 148 168 170
179 180 215
- Aditi and Diti daughters of
Daksha Note 3
- Adityas grandsons of Daksha
Vedic deities 141 179 197
Note 3
- Agastya a rishi eats a demon
20 76 83 85 104 160 206
Note 5
- Ages the four of world 83 85
287 112 Note 2
- Agni god of Fire 57 68 104
127 194 199 20 21 18
- Agriculture condemned 169
- Ahalya wife of Gautama rishi
ravished by god Indra 6
180 187 01
- Air chariots 31 55 63 68 80
84 100 140 177 219
- Air city 84
- Ajas meaning of seeds or
animals 19
- Alshauhini a division of an
army 10
- Ambalika mother of Pandu
36 39
- Ambika mother of Dhritarash-
tra 36 39
- Amrita liquor obtained at
churning of Ocean 6 57 93
- Anarchy dangers of 17
- Anga kingdom=Bengal 41
79 93 111
- Anger evils of 11 64 151 163
- Angiras a rishi 149 Note 3
- Animals killing of 18 19 91
178 167 169 04
- Aniruddha name of Narayana
180 2
- Anugita philosophical work,
199 Note 14
- Apsarases heavenly nymphs
promised to men 32 53 66
193 194 232 4 Note 13
- Aranyakas forest books 152
- Arjuna one of the five Pandus
son or incarnation of god
Indra 1 14 20 23 25 30
39 41 50 52 54 65 81 84
96 97 128 140 165 181
00 03 15 219
associated with Krishna as
Nara Narayana 5 119
one of the five old Indras 48
an incarnation of Indra 7
a son of Indra 7 39
fights with Shiva 65 wor-
ships Shiva 119
- Arjuna Kartta virya 80
- Arka a snake great grand
father of Bhima 40
- Armies size of 100 109 113
121
- Asceticism 4 11 1 9 30
34 48 49 6 65 79 83 84
85 86 87 90 10 115 118
134 140 147 151 160 163
173 178 180 189 10 App
5 Note 17
- Bhishma's arrowy bed 197
sitting between five fires 81
gods afraid of 11 34 10
App rishis afraid of 65
spoken lightly of 90 167
true means of liberation
175
- Ashwatthaman son of Drona
121 137 136 223
- Ashwasen a snake 5
- Ashvins Vedic deities fathers
of Sahadeva and Nakula 10,
39 197

- Asuras, demons, 32, 63, 130, 145, 167. Note 11
- Atheists, 15, 34, 168, 170, 176
- Atri, a prajapati, father of Chandra. Notes 3 and 4.
- Atru, son of Vinata, and Kashyapa, 26.
- Auspicious days, 14.
- Austerities, see Asceticism
- Avatara, a descent, see Incarnation.
- Ayodhya, modern Oudh, 72, 93, 203.
- Balarama, incarnation of white hair of Vishnu, 48, 51, 81, 101, 133, 213, 215.
- Barbaras, Greek barbaroi, 46.
- Beggars, other than Brahmins not allowed.
- Berar, country, 67.
- Bhaga, Vedic deity, eyes plucked out by Shiva, 137, 141
- Bhagadatta, his wonderful weapon, 118
- Bhagavadgita, poem, 112, 113, 181, 200 Note 14 and 17
- Bhagiratha, 78, 194.
- Bhakti, religion of devotion, 90, 178, 181 Note 17.
- Bharata, son of Shakuntala sacrifices cows, 19, 34
- Bharata-varsha, land of Bharata's descendants, 3, 24, 35, 111
- Bhima, one of the five Pandus, son of Vayu, god of wind, incarnation of Indra, 1, 20, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44, 54, 59, 64, 81, 82, 92, 96, 97, 129, 133, 139, 142, 207, 219
- Bhishma, son of Shantanu and Ganga, 17, 36, 37, 49, 56, 58, 61, 99, 109, 113, 136, 148, 165, 197
- Bhoja, country, 111
- Bhrigu, a prajapati, 80 Note 3
- Boar, incarnation of Vishnu, 82, (142) 179. App 5
- Boons, granted, 4, 26, 31, 37, 49, 60, 77, 84, 95, 96, 102, 113, 115, 116, 186, 201. App, 4, 5
- Brahma, neuter, supreme soul of universe, 82, 83, 91, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 173, 176, 177.
- Brahmā, masc, first member of Hindu Trinity, the Creator, 4, 11, 13, 25, 29, 48, 49, 75, 76, 77, 78, 82, 84, 87, 88, 98, 108, 123, 130, 137, 141, 150, 166, 179, 181, 185, 186, 192
- born from Vishnu's navel, 63, 181.
- grants boons, 4, 49 84, 185, App 5
- as fish incarnation, 87, his book, 150
- as Shiva's charioteer, 127, App 5
- cursed by Narada Note 8
- a day and night of. Note 2
- Brahmachari, the student, one of the four stages in a Brahmin's life, 50, 152.
- Brahmanas, 8, 10 Note 18
- Brahmins, *gifts to* 8, 17, 35, 38, 51, 55, 57, 75, 90, 145, 148, 153, 154, 191, 202, 208, 212, 223 App 1
- power of*, 4, 46, 197.
- pre-eminence of 2, 8, 46, 52, 54, 62, 75, 86, 150, 188,
- irritability of, (see curses) 9, 11, 29, 161, 213
- result of swallowing, 28, origin of, 88, 153
- great sin, to kill, 8, 28, 33, 75, 103, 106, 122, 162, 164, 193, to speak against, 29, 184
- to steal from, 164, 193
- of lying to 79
- morals of, 9, 39, 77
- feet washed by Krishna, 8, 55

- a true 46, 85 152 167
 degraded 85 153 195
 duty of 83 151 196
 fond of flesh 76
 superior to gods 89 152 189
 world in charge of 89 given
 to 705 App 1
 great gods 196
 forbidden to drink liquor
 33 43 51 165 214 Note 7
 Brihaspati priest of gods 3
 94 103 149 199 10 Note 3
 Cannibalism see Human flesh
 eaters
 Caste origin of four castes
 88 153 167
 mixture of 10 17 34 37 40
 85 13 152 also 33 83 91
 151 175
 Chance 15 147
 Chandala an outcaste 153
 160 188 190 193
 Chandra moon god ancestor
 of lunar race 27 3 Note 4
 Charms see Incantations
 Charvaka a demon probably
 the sceptical philosopher of
 ancient times 148
 Chedi a country modern Cen
 tral Provinces 55 71 206
 Chin people of 16 11
 Chitrangada a wife of Arjuna
 51 04
 Creation 87 165 185 App 3
 Cremation 39 144 212 16
 Courtesans 154
 Cows sacrifice of 18 19 35
 75 165 192 194 (bulls 04)
 sacredness of 191 196
 power of their urine and
 dung 193
 use of their flesh as food 19
 1 8 App 1
 a cow married to a Rishi 10
 30 79
 the first cow 193
 a cow of plenty = Kamdhenu
 9 9
- gift of cows 19 45 55 90,
 126 194
 glory of 19
 rule earth for sake of 147
 sin of killing 19 1 8 162
 164
 Curses 9 27 28, 30, 33 35 36
 37 38 66 71 78 83 85 91
 104 113 130, 134 140 143
 180 00 113 App 4 Notes
 7 and 8
 curses cannot fail 9 30 128
 Dadhicha rishi gives his bones
 to the gods 7 174
 Daityas demons 6 77 84
 9 161 167 173 App 5
 Note 11
 Dakshinaputra 6 36 174
 149 174 179 193 Note 3
 Damayanti wife of Nala 67
 Danavas demons 6 49 84
 88 9 1 7 130 167 Note
 11
 compose a creed along with
 gods 175
 Dasaratha father of Rama
 4 64 79
 Dead raised 33 9 95 96
 140 204 210 App 4 5
 Death 179 183
 greatest of all ascetics 11
 how born App 3
 Desire freedom from 146 165
 179 200
 Destiny 15 57 60 107 1 6
 130 142 147 183 184
 00 108 213 217
 Devadatta or Bhishma q v
 Devaki mother of Balarama 48
 Devotion or faith see Bhakti
 Dhanwantari physician of gods
 6
 Dharma god of Justice 10 37
 39 59 96 171 178 205 10
 219 Note
 Dhristadyumna son born to
 Draupada from a sacrifice
 45 117 136 138

- Dhritarashtra, uncle of Pandus,
 father of Kurus, and son of
 Vyasa, 1, 10, 37, 38, 40, 110,
 142, 207, 212
 Dissolution of universe, 87, 173
 Dog of Yudhishthira, 2, 218
 Draupada, king of Panchala,
 42, 45, 115, 136.
 Draupadi, daughter of above,
 wife of five Pandus, 2, 13, 15,
 20, 22, 23, 45, 46, 48, 58, 64,
 81, 94, 97, 139, 204, 218,
 Note 9
 Dravida, kingdom, 203
 Drinking, customs, 33, 43, 50,
 51, 52, 63, 66, 89, 102, 128,
 154, 156, 164, 205, 214.
 Note 7
 Drona, son of rishi Bharad-
 waja, 7, 31, 40, 42, 45, 49,
 61, 99, 120, 136, 210, 223
 Duhshasana, one of the Kurus,
 59, 129
 Dushmanta, husband of
 Shakuntala, 33
 Durvasa, a rishi, 34, 37, curses
 Krishna, 197, 215 Note 6
 Duryodhana, eldest of Kurus,
 1, 14, 38, 40, 41, 49, 56, 81,
 92, 101, 131, 181, 199, 221
 Dwaipayana, another name of
 Vyasa
 Dwapara yuga, third of four
 ages of world, 3, 69, 75, 83,
 89, 112, 159 Note 2
 Dwaraka, home of Krishna, 2,
 47, 51, 100, 199, 202, 218
 Dwarf incarnation of Vishnu,
 250
 Earth, description of, 110, 142
 Eclipses, cause of, 27, 112
 Education, no reference to, 17
 Effort, result of human, 15,
 105, 107, 126, 149, 184
 Emancipation, 75, 82, 165, 171,
 177, 178
 Epic Priest, Note 1
 Eunuchs, 66, 97, 131.
 Exaggerations in Mahabharata,
 1, 12, 14, 18, 26, 28, 32, 33,
 34, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 49, 51,
 53, 55, 57, 63, 76, 79, 80, 84,
 93, 100, 109, 113, 121, 130,
 143, 173, 202, 204, 208 Note
 16
 Faith, power of, see Bhakti
 Falsehood, sin of, 13, 57, 79
 Krishna on, 7, 121, 128
 Famine, 33, 83, 87, 159
 Fasting, merits of, 90, 94, 158,
 194, 210, 212.
 Fate, see Destiny
 Fever, origin of, 173
 Fish, incarnation ascribed to
 Brahmā in Shatapatha Brah-
 mana and Mahabharata, in
 later books to Vishnu, 87, 179
 Flesh-eating, practice of, 2, 18,
 19, 62, 76, 77, 89, 91, 93, 128,
 156, 159, 195, 196, 205
 Food, gift of, saves from hell,
 195
 Flood, story of, 86 Note 3
 Forest-dwellers, Bana prastha,
 24, 62, 145, 152, 163, 168,
 200, 208, 217, 218.
 Forgiveness, power of, 13, 46,
 64, 85, 92, 94, 105, 147, 151,
 152, 163, 191, 192
 Fowler, teaching of, 13, 90
 Fowler and pigeon, story of,
 161
 Fruits and flowers, best sacri-
 fice, 19, 170
 Funeral ceremonies, (Shrad-
 dha) 43, 144, 148, 198, 202,
 208, 212, 216
 Gambling, 1, 56, 60, 63, 67, 70,
 98, 154 Note 7
 Gandharva, marriage cere-
 mony, 34
 Gandharvas, attendants on
 gods, 45, 53, 66, 88, 92, 167,
 177, 210 Note 13
 Gandhara, country on west
 bank of Indus, 37, 203

- Gandhari wife of Dhritara h
tra 20 37 60 107 134 142
207
- Ganga river-goddess mother
of Bhishma 35 198
- Ganges 35 40 44 75 78 81
86 111 127 140 144 198
09 App 3
- Ganesha a god son of Shiva
scribe of Mahabharata 5
- Garuda a great bird 6 7
140 Note 3
- Gautama a rishi 6 186 187
01
- Gayatri a sacred verse 179
188
- Ghatotkacha a rakshasa son
of Bhima 44 81 10 11
- Ghee clarified butter used in
sacrifices 30 38 45 5 77
81 141
- God worship of 170 178
plays with men 15 64 165
spoken of in a personal way
1 13 15 60 64 8 87
88 112 147 170 176 183
Note 17
- Gods of the Mahabharata 3
no gods in golden age 83
created by Manu 87
gods perish 87 Note
look on from heaven 41
130
come in person 37 39 220
2
fight with demons 77
character of 146
subject to transmigration
173
as ascetics 180
gods and liberation 180
afraid of a good king 153
afraid of men and demons
11 27 31 34 50 77 78
84 10 184 06
rain down flowers on men
3 14 47 74 134 177
- Godavari river 19 75 81 111
- Goghna Sans word used for a
guest *The cow killer* 19
- Gold gift of to Brahmins 90
1 6 194 05 App 1
- Government rules of 152 154
- Gifts power of 8 17 64 83 90
145
- Greed result of 219
- Haihayas people of Scythian
origin also of Yadu race 80
- Hanuman monkey god 82
179
- Hara name of Shiva 124
- Hari name of Vishnu 59 178
181
- Has in king of lunar race
ancestor of Pandus 35
- Hastinapura town 1 25 30
35 39 76 131 148 197
- Heaven Indra's 5 53 66 75
193 223 Note 13
- Brahmas 5 53 211
- Kuveras and Varunas 53
211
- Shivas (Kailas) 56
- Kshatriyas obtain it by dying
in battle 9 106 134 155
2 1
the true heaven 168
- Yudhisthira in 219
- selfishly desire 83 168
- how obtained 83 158 163
169
- Heavenly witnesses—34 45
74 84 108 130
- Heavenly nymphs see Apsara
ses
- Hell a son saves from 11 24
9 39 76 167 171
does not 167
- ordinary heaven like 4 168
173 Note
- described 1
- Yudhisthira's de cent to 2 1
also 129 137 152
164 19 195 20 06
- Hidimba a rakshasa slain by
Bhima 44

Hidimva, sister of above, mar-
 ries Bhuma, mother of Ghatot-
 kacha, 44, 81
 Himalayas, 53, 65, 81, 178,
 199, 218 App. 3
 Horse sacrifice, 6, 12, 18, 19,
 34, 35, 38, 63, 75, 78, 89, 93,
 103, 164, 165, 175, 179, 196,
 199 App. 1
 Hospitality, 161
 Householder, Grihastha, second
 of four stages in a Brahmin's
 life, 24, 145, 147, 152, 168,
 171
 Human flesh eaters, 20, 44,
 129, 159
 Human sacrifices, 19, 20, 54, 75
 Hunas, the white Huns, 3, 46,
 112
 Ilwala, a Daitya, 76
 Images, their worship, 14, 23,
 65, 110, 137, 194
 Incantations, (mantras) their
 power, 14, 30, 37, 39, 92, 107,
 130, 131, 132, 140, 155, 201
 Incarnations, (Avatars) see
 under Boar, Dwarf, Fish,
 Kalki, Krishna, Parashu-
 rama, Rama, all of Vishnu.
 Pandus incarnations of five
 old Indras, 48, incarnations
 of Krishna, 63. Various,
 210
 Indra, Vedic god, king of
 heaven, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 23, 28,
 29, 31, 32, 35, 39, 42, 52, 57,
 65, 68, 76, 77, 79, 80, 84, 88,
 92, 102, 118, 130, 139, 145,
 151, 185, 187, 189, 192, 199,
 201, 209, 219
 The five old Indras, 47
 How Indra got his 1000 eyes,
 50, 188
 his green beard, 180
 and his blue throat, 180.
 deceives Kama, 93
 threatened by Agastya, 206,
 ravishes Ahalya, 6, 180, 187.

India intoxicated. Note 7.
 his heaven, see under *heaven*
 Indraprastha, capital of Pan-
 dus, 1, 16, 49.
 Injury, abstention from, 19,
 164
 Jackal and Tiger, story of, 156.
 Jajali, a muni, 20
 Jamadagni, a Brahmin, father
 of Parashurama, 80
 Jambudwipa, the known world,
 111, 204
 Janaka, a king, 146, 155.
 Janamejaya, great grandson of
 Arjuna, 25, 27, 30, 52, 181,
 203, 223
 Jarasandha, a king of Maga-
 dha, 20, 54
 Jarat Kau, an ascetic who re-
 fused to marry, 11, 29
 Jumna, river, 36, 37, 49, 76,
 210
 Kacha, son of Brihaspati, 32
 Kadru, wife of Kashyapa,
 mother of 1000 snakes, 26, 27
 Kalinga, country on Coroman-
 del coast, 81, 93
 Kali Yuga, fourth and present
 age of world, 3, 22, 26, 69,
 72, 75, 83, 87, 89, 112, 143,
 153 Note 2
 Kalki, an incarnation of Vishnu,
 not yet arrived, 89, 179
 Kalpa, a period of time, 173
 Note 2
 Kamdhenu, cow of plenty, 36,
 46, 119 Note 5
 Kamyaka, a forest, 85, 93
 Kansa, killed by Krishna, 56,
 213
 Kanwa, a rishi, curses Yadu
 race, 9, 34, 108, 213
 Kanyakubja, or Kanauj, king-
 dom of Vishvamitra, 46
 Karma, fruit of deeds in a for-
 mer life, 15, 115, 120, 183
 Karna, son of Kunti and sun-
 god, half brother of Pandus,

- 38 41 47 49 59 93 99 102
108 129 144 2 1
- Kapila founder of Sankhya
philosophy 19 78 170 176
180 186
- Kashi Benares 36
- Kashyapa a rishi father of
Atru Garuda and the 1000
snakes 8 6 28 30 36 64
79 88 149 Note 3
- Kerakas men with one leg 55
- Killing no murder 1 8 145
00
- Kings duties of 8 16 17 105
149
- Kinnaras men with heads of
horses 8
- Kuratas, savage people 203
- knowledge power of 90 91
105 177
- Kosala country of Ayodhya,
q v
- Kratu a prajapati 149 Note
3
- Kripa a rishi 31 61 99 13
- Krishna an incarnation of
Vishnu 2 89 168
born of black hair of Vishnu
48
eats with Vidur 18 108
his greatness 4 55 56 6
75 114 135 148 197
immoral advice 7 1 1 133
in battle 114 118 119
shows divine form 108 118
00
acknowledges Shiva as sup
reme 5 119 141 185
cursed by Durvasa 197 14
15 Note 6 by Gandhari
143 14
identified with Brahma and
Shiva 149
Nardiyana 5 8 178
obedient to Brahmins 8 55
0 197
gets 16 000 wives from Shiva
J⁸⁶ 217
- as an ascetic 215
also 0 47 49 51 54
55 59 61 62 81 85 100
101 107 129 130 133
138 142 148 179 199 213
215
- Kritavarman one of four sur-
vivors of battle of Kurushe
tra 132
- Krita Yuga first of four ages of
world the golden age 2 26
75 77 83 11 141 153 178
Note
- Kshatriya second of the four
castes the warrior 10 22
37 45 46 54 56 60 64 65
75 81 83 104 145 185 188
origin of 88
duty of 130 137 136 151
- Kunti a wife of Pandu 14 1
37 41 61 14 144 207
- Kurus cousins of Pandus 1 32
39 98 were Rakshasas
210
- Kurukshetra battle of 10 109
numbers killed at 143
pilgrimage to 75
- Kusha sacred grass 28 185
- Kuvera god of wealth 66 83
88 104 202
- Lakshmi goddess of prosperity
incarnate in Draupadi 48
193
- Land gifts of to Brahmins
cannot be resumed 191
- Liberation doctrine of 146 150
168 171 175 177 179 186
Note 17
- Lomapada king of Anga 79
- Lomasha a rishi 81
- Lotus from which Brahma
arose 165 181
- Lunar race 37 Note 4
- Madri wife of Pandu 1 37
38 39 61
- Mahabharata benefit of read-
ing 3 25 66 74 75 1 5
163 175 186 223

- open to Shudras, Chandalas and women, 3, 224
size and date, 3, 25, 223
Mahadeva, another name of Shiva, q v
Mahat, a term in philosophy, 165
Magadha, kingdom, now South Bihar, 54, 93, 203
Maitreya, a rishi, 62
Malava, now Malwa, 55, 93
Manasa, 165 Note 17
Mandara, a mountain, 77,000 miles high used at churning of Ocean, 26, 127, raised by Dushmanta, 33, also, 49 App. 5
Manipura, city in Kalinga, 51, 203
Mantra, charm, 30, 179, 196
Manu, a prajapati, 10, 17, 39, 65, 85, 86, 170, 190 Note 3, 12,
Matali, charioteer of Indra, 84
Matanga, a Chandala who was made a god, 189
Mathura, 37, 54
Marichi, a prajapati, 149 Note 3
Markandeya, a rishi, 5, 64, 85, 149
Marriage, mixed marriages, 17, 34, 37, 81, 132, 152, 164, 190 not before puberty, 22, 68, 94, re-marriage not illegal, 72 early marriages in Kaliyuga, 22, 87
marriage of virgin widows, 190
rules of marriage, 37, 89, 190
system of Niyoga, 37, 38, 190, 191
Brahmins marry king's daughters, 17, 80, marry low caste women, 28
Maruts, 210
Marutta, 199
Maya, a Daitya, son of a rishi, architect of demons, 52, 53
Menaka, celestial nymph, beguiles Vishvamitra, 12, 34,
Meru, a mountain 77,000 miles high, 2, 111, 219
raised by Vishvamitra, 12
Midas, 'The Indian king Midas' App 4
Miraculous, birth of Pandus, 10, 39
of Vyasa, 31
of Rishis, 10, 30 (from a cow) of Diaupadi, 45
of Agastya, 76
of others, 26, 21, 31, 37, 44, 45, 52, 78, 79
Miraculous pitcher, 18, 62, 74
Mithila, capital of N Bihar, 91, 93
Mitra, a Vedic god, joint father of Agastya, 76
Mlechchhas, out-castes, foreigners, 16, 33, 43, 46, 55, 82, 89, 93, 112, 119, 203, 205
Modes, five modes of life, 145, 147, 152 171
Mongoose, speaks, 205
Moral Teaching, 2, 5, 7, 10, 12, 13, 21, 23, 34, 42, 44, 47, 57, 60, 64, 66, 67, 74, 76, 81, 83, 85, 90, 91 104, 105, 129, 130, 145, 159, 160, 163, 164, 166, 169, 170, 175, 189, 191, 192, 194, 195, 196
Muni, a holy sage, 64, 77 Note 1
Nagas, see Snakes
Nahusha, feeds Tashtri with cow's flesh, 19, 170
made king of heaven, 15, 103
Nakula, one of the five Pandus, 1, 39-97, 219
Nala, king of Nishadas, in Vindhya mountains
Nara-Narayana, emanations of Vishnu Krishna being identified with Narayana and Arjuna with Nara, 5, 82, 101, 107, 119 Note c5c

- Nara 59 1 4 178 Note 15
 Narayana 88 1-2 156 176
 178 Note 15
 Narada 7 18 9 11 49 53
 61 68 71 74 85 94 105
 140, 146 17 209 21 2 0
 App 4 Note 8
 Nature matter pradhana 176
 Nishadas a wild tribe one of
 the mixed castes according
 to Manu 49 43 6
 Nyoga system of See under
 Marriage.
 Ocean churning of 6 46
 swallowed by Agastya 7
 Om sacred syllable 122 12
 16 179 186 App 5 and
 17
 Omen 14 38 39 56 59 61
 84 107 110, 213 214
 Panchala kingdom 42 136
 Pancharatra scriptures 180
 Pandu son of Vyasa 18 1
 10, 36 38 10
 Pandus five sons of Pandu 1
 2 30 3 39 etc
 lived in Dwapara yuga 89
 Parada system seclusion of
 women 22 58 68 71 09
 Parashara 18 18 reduces Satya
 wati 10 32
 Parashurama Rama of the
 axe incarnation of Vishnu
 3 80 127 149
 extirpate Kshatriyas 10 37
 75 81 179 185
 fights with Bhishma App
 Parents respect for 9
 Parikshit grandson of Arjuna
 29 140 202 211 18
 Parshvata religion elaborated
 by gods and demons or by
 Shiva 175
 Penance see Asceticism
 penance of five fires 81 168
 Phallic worship 24 1 4 185
 Physicians impure 196 196
 witcheries 116
 Pishunaries 13 14 19 51 4
 90, 94 106
 doubtful benefit of 14 4
 195
 condemned 169
 Pitris Manes or shades of
 dead 91
 Polyandry Draupadi wife of
 five Pandu 4
 Portents see Omens
 Pradhana Nature 18 see
 Note 17
 Pragjyotisha a country on
 borders of Assam 03
 Prahlada a devotee of Vishnu
 Prapatti identified with
 Brahman (the creator) 4
 used for Daksha one of the
 Prajapatis 26
 the three sons of Prithu
 Dwita Trita 178 Note 3
 Prapatti, the secondary crea-
 tors 167 Note 3
 Prakriti Note 17
 Prana the vital breath 166
 Praya the practice of starving
 158
 Prayaga (Allahabad) 75
 Pride results of 32 48 219
 story of Nalmasha 85 103
 Prithu first king 151
 Providence 15 64
 Pulaha a prajapati 149 Note
 3
 Pulastya a prajapati 119
 Note 3
 Pundra a kingdom Bengal
 03
 Punishment need of 151
 Puranas the eighteen 1 25
 223 Vayu Purana 17 89
 Puru son of Yayati 3
 Purusha 179 Note 17
 Pushan a Vedic deity as cult-
 ed by Shiva 124 111
 Pushkara sacred lake 3 51
 63 74 196 App 3
 Pushkara brother of Nala 70

- Qualities, The three, Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas, 173, 176
 Note 17
- Rahu, a demon, 27, 112 Note 3
- Rajas, one of the three qualities, q v
- Rajasuya, a sacrifice, 1, 53, 54, 55
- Rama, son of Dasharatha, an incarnation of Vishnu, 4, 64, 79, 82, 94, 130, 179
- Rakshasas, demons, 9, 20, 44, 53, 78, 81, 83, 120, 130, 138, 167, 201 Note 10
- Ratnideva, feeds guests with cow's flesh, 19 App 1
- Ravana, a great ascetic demon, 4
- Religious observances, 22, 65, 76, 83, 98, 138, 150
- Renunciation, benefit of, 145, 152, 165, 167
- Repentance, value of, 91, 195
- Revelation, Shruti
- Rig-veda, 64
- Rituparna, a king of Ayodhya 72
- Rishis, the seven, 86, 165, 180, Note 3
 their curses see *curses*
 their low morals, 9, 30, 32, 34, 39, 47, 79, 80 Note 1
 their bad temper, 9, 11, 35, 78, 85, 197, 213, 215
 their power, can fly, 61, 76, 79, 82, 177, 210
- Rishyasringa, a rishi, 79,
- Rohini, mother of Krishna, 48
- Rudra, Vedic deity, afterwards identified with Shiva, 108, 124, 141, 179, 210
- Rudras, the eleven sons of Kashyapa, 174, 179, 197
- Sachi, wife of Indra, 80
- Sacrifices, horse, see under horse
 snake, 18, 25, 27, 29, 30, 52
 cow, 18, 19, 35, 75, 165, 170, 192, 194, 204 (bull)
 animal, 48, 52, 91, 204.
 human, 19, 20, 54^c, 75.
 power of, 19^c, 45, 117, 141, 170
 doubted or condemned, 12, 19, 167, 169, 170, 205
 v liberation, 172
 seeds better than animals, 19, 169, 205, 206
 gods sacrificed without Shiva, 141
 use of, to gods, 63
- Sagara, king of Ayodhya^a, 78
- Sage and Dog, story of, 158
- Sahadeva, one of the five Pandus, 1, 39, 97, 219
- Salvation, how obtained, 3., 90, 91, 105, 167, 168, 171, 177
- Samaveda, 64
- Sambhu, name for Shiva, 124
- Samika, a rishi, 30
- Sanat Kumara, a rishi, 180
- Sanat Sujata, philosophical teaching of, 106 Note 14
- Sanjaya, charioteer, 104, 110, 130, 132, 209
- Sandhya, *twilight*, religious ceremony performed then, 70
- Sankhya, philosophy of, 62, 78, 170, 175, 176, 179, 182, 186 Note 17
- Saraswati, a river, and river goddess, 75, 111
- Sati, practice of self-immolation of widows, 21, 39, 61, 163, 211, 216, 217 Note 3
- Sati, wife of Shiva, the first Sati
- Sattwa, see Qualities
- Satyavan, husband of Savitri, 94
- Satyawati, seduced by Parashara rishi, 10, 31, 35, 39
 mother of Vyasa, and wife of Shantanu, the king

Satyaki one of the seven survivors of Pandu army 101 139
 Satyajug see Kritajug
 Savitri, Vedic deity, 141
 Savitri wife of Satyavan 93
 Sea of Milk 178 180
 Self-control 91 163 167 100 17
 Shakas Scythians 3 46 55 11 119
 Shakuntala daughter of Vishvamisra 12 33
 her moral teaching 13 34
 Shalya king of Madra 63 102 16 131
 Shamva son of Krishna 213
 Shesha serpent supporter of World 9 88
 Shishupala king of Chedi 55
 Shiva greatness of 5 48 65 117 119 123 137 141 197
 born from Vishnu's head 63
 at gods sacrifice 174
 his attendants 174
 his blue throat 7 180
 his 1008 names 175 185
 his four faces 6 50
 see also 20 23 4 37 15 54 56 78 84 88 98 108 115 130 131 151 173 181 196 0
 Shiva a long story of hawk and pigeon App 6
 Shop keeper and Ascetic story of 169
 Shudras fourth caste 9 17 83 85 89 91 126 151 167
 wrong to teach 17 15 184
 salvation for 3 75 168 196
 origin of 89
 cannot possess wealth 152
 Shukra priest of demons 3 149 Note 3
 Silk tribute from Chin 16
 Sin expiated by pilgrimages 74 76

by sacrifices 148 05
 by repentance 90, 91
 its nature 148
 its origin 163
 men originally sinless 86 150 178 187
 Sikhandin son of King Draupadi born from a sacrifice 115 App 2
 Sita wife of Rama 94
 Skanda son of Shiva 10
 Slavery of women chiefly 51 55 57 58 215 App 1
 Snakes 26 27 9 30 31 40, 51 89 130 202
 Social Conditions 15 46 49 57 74
 Solar Race Note 4
 Soma 46 88 210
 Sonlessmer fate of 24 9 39 76 167 171
 Soul the 95 146 166 17
 Sringa son of a rishi and a cow 30 79
 Stars influence of 15
 Sthirya a prajapati Note
 Subhadra sister of Krishna 51 118 202
 Success secret of 156
 Sukra son of Vyasa 177
 Sunda and Upasunda two demons 49
 Supreme Soul 8 88 106 166 168 177 178 180 182
 Surabhi the first cow 193
 Surya the sun god 7 37 41 6 93 108 130 179
 Svayamvara the choosing of a husband by princesses 2 38 46 51 68 7 94
 Takavi advances for seed 17
 Takshaka a snake son of Kashyapa 30 5
 Tamas see Qualities
 Tamil country 87
 Tamraruna place of pilgrimages 19 75
 Tashtri a god 19

- Taxation, 17, 154.
 Temples, 23, 61
 Tirathas, see Pilgrimages.
 Tortoises, king of, used at churning of Ocean, 26, 179
 Tradition, Smṛiti
 Transmigration, 28, 45, 75, 83, 86, 91, 146, 148, 156, 166, 168, 172, 177, 188, 193, 195
 Note 2
 Trees, sacred, 61
 Trieta Yuga, second of four ages, 83, 112, 159 Note 2.
 Trigarta, kingdom of, 98, 117, 202
 Truth, greatness of, 7, 12, 34, 65, 83, 85, 91, 106, 121, 151, 156, 163, 172, 191, 192
 penance v truth, 12, 34, 164, 167.
 Twashtri, an ascetic, 102
 Uchchaishrava, horse produced at churning of Ocean, 27
 Ugrasena, king of Mathura, 213
 Ulupi, wife of Arjuna, 51, 204
 Uma, a wife of Shiva, 174, 185
 Note 3
 Unmarried women, fate of, 21.
 Upanishads, 25, 179, 181.
 Uparichara, king of Chedi, 31
 Urine and dung of cows sacred, 193, 194
 Ushanas, a name of Shukra, 161
 Utanka, story of, 200
 Uttara, daughter of king of Virata, 98
 Urvāsi, an Apsarasa, 66 Note 13
 Vaishampayana, disciple of Vyasa, 25, 223
 Vaishya, the third caste, 83, 88, 126, 132, 151, 154, 188
 Vaka, a rakshasa, 44
 Varuna, a Vedic deity, Greek ouranos, 31, 66, 68, 76, 218.
 Vasishtha, a rishi, 10, 35, 45, 119, 193 Note 3 and 5
 Vasus, celestial beings, 19, 35, 197.
 Vasudeva, father of Krishna, 21, (179) 215.
 Vasuki, serpent king, used at churning of Ocean, 26, 29, 40
 Vatapi, a Daitya eaten by Agastya, 20, 77, 160
 Vayu, wind god, father of Bhuma, 10, 39, 74, 82.
 Vayu purana, 17, 89
 Vedas, the three Vedas, 17, 64, the four Vedas, 3, 25, 53, 83, 89
 Vedas generally, 17, 24, 67, 75, 80, 82, 85, 87, 91, 102, 104, 119, 124, 125, 126, 127, 145, 146, 150, 152, 156, 160, 167, 168, 170, 171, 181, 186, 188, 206 Note 18
 wrong to sell or teach to a Shudra, 17, 152 not required, 168.
 the Mahabharata = fifth Veda, 3
 Vedangas, limbs of Veda, 17
 Vedanta, end of Veda, 167.
 Note 17
 Vedic gods, position in Mahabharata, 4
 Vichitra Virya, a king, 10 App 2
 Vidarbha, or Berār, 67, 72
 Vidura, son of Vyasa and a serving girl, incarnation of god Dharma, 18, 37, 43, 49, 59, 142, 207, 210
 Vinata, daughter of *Prajapati*, wife of Kashyapa, 26
 Virata = Bairat in Jaipur, Rajputana, capital of Matsya kingdom, 97
 Virtue Profit and Pleasure, 42, 64, 127, 150, 154, 165 App 5.
 Vishnu, second god in Hindu trinity, 4, 26, 28, 31, 33, 48, 59, 63, 77, 80, 82, 87, 89, 100, 119, 123, 127, 137, 143, 151, 168, 175, 181 C C

- his 1000 names 197
 Shiva sings his praise 197
 acts as Shiva's arrow App 5
 Vishvakarma architect of gods
 50
 Vishvamisra royal rishi 9 11
 34
 quarrel with Visishthra 46
 Note 5
 becomes a Brahmin 8 46
 189 eats dogs flesh 159 13
 Vitra tree 15 31
 Vrihadashwa rishi 6
 Vritra a demon swallowed
 Indra 77 103 113
 Vyasa rishi author of Maha
 bharata 10 18 23 5 31
 35 37 38 39 47 6 107
 1 3 140 14 199 0 07
 217 23
 War Rules of 155
 Water oblation 144 198 1
 Wealth of ancient days 1 16
 4 45 46 49 51 53 55 57
 70 08
 Weapons Heavenly 41 5 65
 66 77 93 99 118 1 0 17
 1 3 130 131 137 139 16
 18
 White Island Narada's visit to
 177
 Women position of 0-
 must obey a husband 5 1
 39
 wrong to survive a husband
 or marry again 21 44 7
 162
 husband her only god 1 90
 162 184
 eat after him 62
 highest duty to serve him 44
 90
- praise of wives 31 70 13 90
 94 16
 no trust in women 1 63
 106 187
 cannot keep a secret 21 144
 why created 187
 salvation for women 3 168
 given away as gifts 49 51
 55 57 58 718 App 1
 unmarried women cannot
 enter heaven 3
 the woman whose sex was
 changed App -
 Worldwide conquests 1 33
 35 37 4 54 55 80 93 07
 03
 Yadu son of King Yayati of
 lunar race 39
 Yadava or Yadu race 9 37
 48 143 113 116
 Yajur Veda 64
 Yaksha 53 83 96 130 167
 Note 10
 Yama god of the dead 47 66
 68 8 98 95 104 179
 Yavanas the Greeks 3 4 46
 55 87 93 11 119
 Yayati a king of lunar race
 cast out of heaven 5 37
 Yoga a system of philosophy
 6 119 146 167 168 173
 174 176 177 179 18 186
 215 Note 17
 Yudhishthira a son of Dharmā
 god of Justice eldest of Pan-
 dus 1 7 17 23 39 40 42
 4 43 47 56 76 81 85 92
 96 97 1 1 133 165 168 197
 one of the five old Indras 48
 an incarnation of Indra 7
 Yuyutsu a son of Dhritarash-
 tra 131 08 18